

## REUPLOAD!!Tommyinnit; the three ends and two beginnings

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# REUPLOAD!!Tommyinnit; the three ends and two beginnings

by [Duelstrike13](#)

## Summary

Tommy... hadn't been doing great after the prison. That was probably a given.  
What wasn't was the god watching above who decided she'd had enough of them all.  
Trapped in a room with the rest of the server and forced to watch Tommy's memories? Yeah.  
Fuck wherever he'd just come back from, this was his personal hell.

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Pretty much, Drista brings a majority of the members of the server to watch Tommy's Memories.

Hello!! This is a Reupload/Remix of "Tommyinnit; the three ends and two beginnings" by 47Bats (Who Unfortunately Deleted the Fic and I believe their account. But if they do contact me and request I take this down, I will respect their request)

## Notes

Inspired by the Original Fic, 'Tommyinnit; the three ends and two beginnings' by 47bats.  
[Archive won't let me link the place where it's reuploaded] but this is the link here;  
[https://web.archive.org/web/20220427163742/https://archiveofourown.org/works/30610370?view\\_full\\_work=true](https://web.archive.org/web/20220427163742/https://archiveofourown.org/works/30610370?view_full_work=true)

Edit; So I've heard that 47bats said this was, well, Completed, but it didn't quite sit well with me with how abrupt the ending was. So This is a Reupload and Completed Version.

- Inspired by [Continued 'Tommyinnit: The Three Ends and Two Beginnings'](#) by [Newt\\_and\\_toads](#)

# Authors Note.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Hello!! Thank you guys so much for clicking on this rewrite!!  
As you can probably tell, this will be a reupload/remix of the fic "**Tommyinnit; the three ends and two beginnings**" alongside the addition of the continuation written by Newt\_and\_toads!! [**Continued 'Tommyinnit: The Three Ends and Two Beginnings'**]

Not Much will be changed from the original story, other than grammar and other things added here and there.

But, I'm very excited about this, and I hope you all will enjoy!!

But for those who never read the original fic, below is the summary v

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Tommy... hadn't been doing great after the prison. That was probably a given.

What *wasn't* was the god watching above who decided she'd had enough of them all.

Trapped in a room with the rest of the server and forced to watch Tommy's memories? Yeah. Fuck wherever he'd just come back from, *this* was his personal hell.

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Pretty much, Drista brings a majority of the members of the server to watch Tommy's Memories. At this current moment, I'm starting on the *First* chapter. And this will take me quite a bit to work on, so I hope you understand!!

Edit; If you'd like, My Friend owns a discord server that's a dsmp/mcyt fanfic archive!! If you want more recommendations or something else to read, come and join us!! <3

[The Atlas Archives](#)

## Chapter End Notes

Like I said, this might take me a bit, as I do work so please be patient!! <3

ALONG SIDE THIS, PLEASE READ THE TAGS AND ANY WARNINGS ALONG THE WAY!!!



# WatchTower

## Chapter Summary

Tommy... hadn't been doing great after prison. That was probably a given.

What wasn't was the god watching above who decided she'd had enough of them all.

Trapped in a room with the rest of the server and forced to watch Tommy's memories? Yeah. Fuck wherever he'd just come back from, this was his personal hell.

“He’s *what?*”

Phil could hardly contain himself as he processed what his eldest son had just told him. His wings flared up unhappily, hands gripping the small table in the kitchen of their cottage. Sun streamed in through one of the windows, lighting the room.

“I didn’t believe it at first,” Technoblade began, his massive form leaning against the counter, arms crossed, “but he’s really dead set on it.”

“I can’t believe him...” Phil muttered, running a hand through his hair and trying hard to quell the anger bubbling within him, “After everything Wilbur did for him... his older brother!”

There was a beat of silence, neither of them wanting to say it.

“We have to stop him.” The elder urged, frowning deeply.

“I know.” Technoblade sighed, eyes tired, “I know...”

Tommy was having a horrible day.

Actually just a horrible time in general.

For the past three weeks, he'd barely moved from his spot in the tower. Not to eat, not to sleep, not to do anything. Only catering to his basic necessities when he was forced to. Binoculars were strung around his neck, more often pressed against his eyes than not. He was constantly vigilant. He couldn't bear the idea of looking away, even for a second. Ranboo and Tubbo had come around quite a few times, muttering things to themselves as they watched Tommy with strange expressions. They'd tried to convince him to take a break, to come

down and visit Michael, to stay with them, check up on the hotel, anything other than sitting and staring at the prison, but to no avail.

With a begrudging resignation, the two had accepted they wouldn't be able to get him away from the tower unless they dragged him back to Snowchester physically. Tommy, however, had made it abundantly clear that he would meet any attempt at physical contact with violence and verbal assault.

So they fell back on a much less favoured plan, which mostly consisted of making sure he had food and wasn't dead. They checked in a lot, always trying to get him to talk about anything other than the prison, but Tommy could tell they were getting tired. Of the tower, of the prison, of everything that had to do with him really.

Tommy shifted silently, pulling the sleeves of the sweater he was wearing down further. It was much colder up so high, and he'd found that there was a constant lingering chill that came with being resurrected; he was never warm enough. Ranboo had caught on pretty quickly and offered a large maroon sweater of his. It was huge, in all honesty. Tommy had muttered quietly about not needing it before swiping it from Ranboo's grip, face still sour.

The blond raised the binoculars to his face once more, staring intently at different parts of the prison. His line of vision normally didn't stray from where He was for too long, but he made sure to check everywhere he could see regularly. He tended to go into a sort of trance when doing it, and time became the least of his worries. He could go hours without realizing even a few minutes had gone by.

He wasn't sure how long he'd been out of it when a hand was placed on his shoulder.

Instantly, he felt his blood run cold. Ranboo and Tubbo knew that he wasn't to be touched. They would never do that, which meant it was someone other than the two touching him.

The sensation alone felt like it burned, his body was not used to being touched in any way, and Tommy quickly leaped from his seat, eyes wide. He pressed his back into the corner of the tower, staring at the intruders as he breathed heavily. His father and older brother stood where he once sat, and he wasn't able to gauge their expressions.

"What the fuck do you want?" He growled, trying to stop the shaking of his hands desperately. Technoblade raised a brow, unimpressed.

"Hello to you too." The piglin hybrid muttered, and Tommy knew he needed them out, immediately.

"Ranboo told us you died," Phil began, and Tommy almost laughed at how blunt and rude the first thing that came out of his mouth was, "Guess he was lying." The winged man huffed out a halfhearted laugh. Tommy tried to control his breathing, nails digging into his palms as he tried to keep himself grounded. The hood of his sweater was up, hiding the white streak in his hair as well as shadowing his sunken-in and pale face. They didn't notice anything amiss.

"Fuck. Off." He hissed, glaring at the two. That seemed to strike a chord with both of them as they returned the glare.

“We just came here to talk mate.” Phil said, any hint of amusement gone. The faintest traces of blood began to well in the small grooves where Tommy's nails dug deep.

“I don't want to fucking talk to you. Either of you.” He growled, teeth clenched tightly. His back was still pressed up against the walls, waiting for them to attack him in any sort of way.

“Tough luck.” Technoblade said simply as if he was daring Tommy to challenge him. The youngest of the three silently wondered where Ranboo and Tubbo were at that moment; if they'd care that Phil and Techno were there, or if they'd be relieved someone else had finally decided to deal with him.

They spent a moment in silence, sizing each other up.

“Okay listen,” Techno began finally, sighing and slumping slightly “You can't kill Dream.”

The name alone sent shudders through Tommy's spine as he tried to back up even further. He merely stared at them, unable to respond, despite the need he felt to curse them out for even daring to bring something like that up around him.

“He's got the revive book,” Phil said, and it was like another slap to the face for Tommy, “we need it to bring Wilbur back and-”

“No.”

His father blanched, almost looking shocked that he'd been interrupted. There was a pause as he and Techno stared at Tommy.

“What did you say?”

The youngest swallowed thickly, grinding his teeth together and trying to retain his cool.

“I said no.” He repeated, giving his all to keep his voice from wavering. How these two had managed to come into his tower and hit almost every nail on the mark, angering and scaring him more and more as if it was a game, was beyond him. He couldn't keep himself from shaking at that point. “You're not bringing Wilbur back.”

Phil and Techno shared a look for a moment, as if they were telepathically conversing, before turning back to him.

“You've gotta be fucking joking,” Phil said, almost laughing in disbelief, “how selfish can you get?”

Tommy nearly knocked his head against the wall, rearing back at the statement. Before he could even reply his father continued.

“Wil's your brother, Tommy.” He said, eyes stone cold with resentment, “He always looked out for you, always cared for you, and now you're turning your back on him?”

A part of Tommy screamed that he could explain himself; explain how Wilbur was not the man they believed him to be; how Wilbur had ruined him, much before Dream ever got a

chance.

But another part, a louder part, cried out that he should keep it all inside. He didn't need to share his weakness with the world. He didn't want everyone to know how pathetic he was when they already knew too much. He glowered at the two, face contorting into a snarl.

"And if I am?" He retorted, pushing his luck. Phil seemed to grow even angrier at that, taking a step forward at that and not caring when Tommy went pale, eyes widening.

Despite their history, Tommy was sure that was where things ended. He could see the scene playing out in his mind; His father would unsheath a sword, plunge it into his chest, much like he'd done to his other son before, and it would be over.

Instead? He found his surroundings shifting.

At first, he thought he was passing out. He knew the feeling well and figured at that point he really didn't care, he'd lost too much of his fighting spirit, but it seemed Phil and Techno were also feeling whatever was happening, as they both went silent, looking at each other with puzzled expressions. Before he even knew what was going on, Tommy was on his knees in a new place.

With a shudder and a gasp, he threw his head up, scanning his surroundings. It was a small dark room, carpeted and stuffy. He swallowed thickly, eyes trying to adjust and make out more. His heart sank when he realized Techno and Phil were there as well, but not as much as when he realized everyone was there.

Much like him, almost the entirety of the SMP was in varying degrees of confusion, blinking around and trying to gauge their new area. Tommy heaved a gasp, jumping to his feet.

He felt his heart rate slow slightly as he looked over everyone for the ninth time. If there was a god, and he knew there were several, they didn't hate him that much.

Within the room were himself, Technoblade, Phil, Tubbo, Ranboo, Quackity, George, Sapnap, Sam, Karl, Puffy, Fundy, Niki, and Jack. He was nowhere to be found... but it seemed neither was an exit.

Before anyone could truly gather their bearings, a light began to glow from the other side of the room. It was soft and faint, unfamiliar to all but one. The group turned their heads to the source, eyes widening in shock and confusion, while all Tommy could do was practically melt with relief.

"Drista..." he began softly, making his way over to the god. She was standing opposed to them, a mask covering her face. Tommy couldn't help but smile.

There was a moment when everyone simply stood in complete confusion and befuddlement.

"Okay, what the fuck is going on?" Quackity demanded finally, blinking the daze out of his eyes. They all stood at that point, not knowing what to do or where to go.

"Where are we?" Fundy asked, looking all around the room.



“How did we get here?” Tubbo asked, gripping Ranboo’s hand tightly.

“Who the hell is that?” George questioned, looking in Drista’s direction.

“Calm down.” She ordered, and it felt almost threatening. Well, to everyone who didn’t know her. Tommy stood confidently behind her, smirking. “Give me a minute, god...” He almost laughed at how unorganized she sounded.

“I brought you here,” She said, “I’m Drista, one of the gods of this server.”

The SMP ensemble collectively frowned, looking at each other unsurely, not knowing what to do. What was there to say to a statement like that?

“I’ve tried to let you guys work things out on your own, but apparently you’re only smart enough to start conflict, not resolve it.” She muttered, the soft glow emanating from her growing slightly stronger at her frustration. They at least had the decency to look abashed.

“You lot are going to sit here and watch what I put on the screen. I don’t care what stupid things you have going on in the server, you will not be leaving this room until I say so.”

With their eyes more adjusted and the god in the room bringing attention to it, they could make out a seating area and a large screen. As though she’d said it aloud, they slowly shuffled into the rows, not wanting to upset the god any further. The first row was Tommy, Ranboo, Tubbo, and Puffy. In the second row were George, Quackity, Karl, and Sapnap. In the third row, sat Fundy, Techno, and Phil. And in the fourth and final row, were Sam, Niki, and Jack. Drista nodded silently.

Without a word, she suddenly disappeared from the room, the glow going with her, and they were left to sit in complete darkness and silence.

“This has to be a fucking fever dream.” Fundy announced after a couple of beats. A couple of them nodded, but no one could see in the dark.

“It can’t be real...” George mumbled, laughing incredulously.

“Tommy, you know her?” Puffy asked.

“Yeah... she’s my friend.” He answered hesitantly. A couple of scoffs rang out through the room, but without his vision, he wasn’t sure who was behind them.

“Of course Tommy’s friends with a god.” Niki muttered bitterly, “She probably gives him all sorts of free things.”

Besides the stinging that came with Niki of all people being the one to say that, Tommy wanted to argue back that he quite literally was the poorest person on the server, but held his tongue.

Before anyone could say anything in response, the screen lit up.

“Here we fucking go I guess...” Tommy muttered.

No one laughed.

# When Wilbur Was There.

## Chapter Summary

:D

The screen lit up, temporarily blinding them as they had to adjust once more. When he could properly see again, Tommy almost didn't recognize the face on the screen.

**A short, young blonde boy stood on the edge of a cliff, smiling confidently. He had his arms on his hips, chest puffed out. Beneath him, a small gated community sat, a van one of the very few builds inside the walls.**

Tommy stared with wide eyes, lips parted slightly as he watched in almost disbelief. His bandaged hand came up to touch his face, fingerprints that had burnt off so many times ghosting against his cheek. That was *him*. The last time he'd looked in the mirror, he'd looked nothing close to that.

The younger version on the screen had bouncy joyful hair, fluffing up and blowing in the wind. He still had braces, though it didn't seem to bother him at all. His eyes were a bright blue, a playful glint in them. Though somewhat scrawny, he looked healthy and filled out.

Tommy looked down at his hands. Nails chewed raw, covered in scars. The white part of his hair fell forwards, obscuring his view slightly, and he tucked it back into place. His cheeks were sunken in, clothes hung off his emaciated frame. There were large bruises under his grey dulled eyes, little scars and cuts littering his face, and his hair was flat, greasy, and matted with blood. He swallowed thickly.

“Holy fuck is that Tommy?” Quackity asked, leaning forward with interest. The others seemed intrigued as well. Whether or not they noticed how his state had so drastically deteriorated, they didn't say.

**“Thought I’d find you up here.” A voice called, a small smile in their tone. The young Tommy looked back, smiling widely.**

The air grew tense in the room immediately.

**“Wilbur!” He cried excitedly, waving at the man.**

**Wilbur Soot strode forward, fully adorned in his General’s attire. He had a relaxed face, smirking softly.**

**“Admiring the country, are we?” He teased, ruffling Tommy’s hair. The blonde hissed, swatting at him and spouting profanities. Wilbur only laughed.**

Tommy’s own hand raised to where Wilbur had touched him on the screen, swallowing thickly as he tried to imagine what it’d felt like. He didn’t really remember many good things anymore. Images of Wilbur gripping his hair tightly and dragging him to the floor flashed in his mind, and he quickly brought his hand back down, biting his lip. He fucking hated this.

“He looks dumb in that hat...” Tubbo mumbled, trying to raise the mood. The other residents of the room chuckled, some agreeing quietly. Tommy tried to relax but found his knee bouncing up and down, he frowned.

**“I’ve been talking to Dream,” Wilbur hummed, looking off the cliff and into the distance. His long blue coat flapped in the wind, one of the ends hitting Tommy in the face. The young boy scowled, pushing the coattail away only for it to come billowing back.**

Many of them laughed at that, choosing to ignore the name in Wilbur’s mouth.

**“Dream, eh?” Tommy grinned, tilting his chin up, “what about?”**

**“Our independence of course. Idiot.” The older replied, but there was no malice in his tone.**

Tommy felt his heart drop, thinking back to the days when Wilbur’s insults were just lighthearted banter; days when he felt safe around the man.

*“You fucking idiot!”*

*“I- I’m sorry Wil, really I just-”*

*“Jesus, can’t you do anything right Toms?”*

**“And?” Tommy asked, “What’d the big man say?”**

**Wilbur looked down at him, a brow raised.**

**“What do you think he said?” He murmured, and the blonde still didn’t look the least bit discouraged. Wilbur sighed, momentarily removing his hat so he could card a hand through his unruly hair. Tommy sat wordlessly, letting his legs hang off the edge of the cliff as he swung them back and forth. It was a long way down, Fundy, Tubbo, and Eret were mere specks below them, milling about in the premature L’manberg.**

**They spent a couple of moments in silence. Wilbur stood at Tommy’s side, and as the sun set, his shadow slowly cast over the boy more and more. The wind ruffled their hair and clothes, and the older gripped his hat.**

**“There’s war coming, Tommy.” He said, tone sad and heavy. Tommy merely hummed, still looking far off at the tree line.**

**“I want you to be my right-hand man, to help lead our men in the fight against Dream. Will you follow me into battle, Tommy?”**

**Tommy still didn't look up, a faraway look in his eyes. He didn't seem very bothered by anything his brother was saying.**

**"You know I'd follow you anywhere, Wil." He replied quietly. Wilbur huffed a laugh, dipping his head and grinning softly.**

**"Yeah," he raised his head slightly, staring down at the boy who was still looking off, "I know."**

Tommy took a deep steadying breath, trying to keep his emotions in check. Rage bloomed in his chest at the fond memory.

He *had* followed Wilbur. He'd followed him until the end and it'd gotten him nowhere. He'd followed Wilbur without hesitation just for the older to up and leave him.

He'd even followed Wilbur into death.

"Wonder where that passionate loyalty went." Technoblade commented dryly, face unimpressed, though, after years of knowing his big brother, Tommy could tell there was a fondness in his eyes reserved only for Wilbur. The others laughed, though some of them seemed bitter about it. Tommy scowled, growing angrier by the second as he forced himself to bite his tongue.

There weren't many ways to justify his actions without revealing his weaknesses.

"Piss off." He muttered, crossing his arms. Techno looked as if he wanted to reply, but was interrupted by the screen as the scene changed.

**The sun was bright, shining down on the little group hidden within the walls. Eret and Wilbur were relaxing, backs against the van and cooling in the shade. Fundy was**

**napping in the sun not too far off, nestled in the grass just a couple feet from them.**

Both Tubbo and Fundy instantly lit up at the memory, grinning widely.

“I remember this day!” Tubbo insisted excitedly. “Wilbur managed to get us some cakes and fruit so we had a picnic to celebrate!”

“Why would cakes and fruit be such a big deal?” Ranboo asked.

“We didn’t eat much other than rations,” Fundy explained, shrugging, “it was dangerous to leave the walls so we never even got a good farm going. We didn’t have livestock so up until the election we survived on mostly bread and water.”

“Man, I don’t even know how Wilbur got the stuff for a cake,” Tubbo hummed happily, reminiscing. Neither seemed to notice the mood in the room having gone slightly sour.

“That’s pretty depressing...” Sapnap mumbled, and a couple of others nodded. Tubbo turned to glare.

“It was dangerous because of you three.” He bit out, words clipped. Sapnap seemed to shrink under Tubbo’s gaze, and George glared at the goat hybrid, though no one could see from behind the goggles.

**“Tubboooooo!”** A loud cry rang out from the left of the two adults, though neither of them looked.

**“What is it, Tommy?”** Another voice sighed, though they sounded slightly amused.

**Tubbo and Tommy were both strewn upon the grass, Tubbo upright as he seemed to be embroidering something, and Tommy leaning on his shoulder.**

“You look a lot younger in these, Tommy.” Puffy commented, interested in how the boy seemed to have grown so much in such a short time.

“Yeah well,” he laughed, “got me braces taken off and had a growth spurt. Think my voice changed a bit too...”

**“I’m hot!” Tommy whined, voice high and reedy.**

The room laughed as Tommy’s cheeks went red.

“I’ll say.” Sam muttered, smiling.

**“I’d say you’re actually quite ugly.” Tubbo replied, a ghost of a smile on his face. Instantly Tommy shot up, whacking his friend as the older laughed.**

**“That’s not what I meant and you know it!” He hissed, flopping down on his back and staring at the sky with a pout on his face. Tubbo rolled his eyes, smiling visibly.**

**“I want to-” The blonde paused, eyes widening, “I want to go swimming.”**

**Tubbo stopped at this, placing his project down on the grass and looking at his friend. Tommy sat up, looking over in his older brother’s direction.**

**“Wil-”**

**“No.” Wilbur interrupted, not even looking over. Tommy gave him an affronted glare while Tubbo visibly deflated.**



**“But Wil-”**

**“I said no.”**

**Eret looked over at the two children, who both seemed to be at least somewhat upset at the news. She looked over at Wilbur and nudged him with her arm. He looked at her, unimpressed.**

**“There’s a stream a little way up, Wil.” She informed him, “opposite direction of the castle.”**

**“Eret,” Wilbur began, sighing tiredly.**

**“It’ll be good for them.” She insisted, “Good for all of us actually.”**

**“Where is Eret, by the way?” Karl asked, looking around.**

**“She’s successfully removed herself from almost all conflict.” Drista’s disembodied voice came from overhead, “There was no need to drag her here when she’s learned her lesson. Unlike you lot...”**

**“Fair enough I guess.” Ranboo hummed, not particularly upset. Agreeable bastard.**

**The scene shifted to a forested area, a small shallow stream running through the woods. It wasn’t exactly what Tommy had envisioned when he’d asked to go swimming, but it was better than nothing.**

**“You bitch!” Tubbo shrieked, jumping in the air as Tommy splashed cold water at him, a devious grin on his face. The older immediately retaliated, splashing back as hard as he could. Their coats had been stripped and left on the riverside, their long uniform pants rolled up past their calves as they amused themselves.**

**Eret watched the two laughing and chasing each other with a smile on her face. She couldn't help the laugh tumbling from her lips as the two children teamed up against Fundy.**

**“NO NO NO NO!” the fox hybrid was bolting around, trying to avoid the teens with water buckets as they chased him, both of them smiling evilly. Eventually, they caught him, and he let out a bloodcurdling scream.**

**“Do you idiots know how long it takes for my tail to dry!?” He whined, holding his soggy tail as if it was a fallen comrade. Tubbo and Tommy only laughed.**

**Wilbur was standing off to the side, completely vigilant as he scanned their surroundings. Eret put a reassuring hand on his shoulder.**

**“Relax, Wil.” She smiled, “look at how much fun they’re having.”**

**The two of them looked back at where a furious Fundy was knelt in the stream, holding Tommy facedown in the water as Tubbo laughed hysterically. When Tommy's air ran out, he heaved the boy up and was immediately met by an onslaught of profanities and kicks aimed at him. All three of them were smiling wide though.**

**“Remind me to never get your tail wet.” Sam said, looking at Fundy. The latter laughed loudly.**

**“Who knows how long it'll be till they can do this again.”**

**Wilbur's face softened, smiling for just a moment.**

**“I miss those days...” Tubbo whispered, eyes sad. Tommy frowned sympathetically. He missed them too.**

“No offense but what exactly is the point of this?” Quackity inquired, staring up at the ceiling, “Are a couple of cute home video-type shits supposed to make wars just stop?” He snarked.

“I’m warming you idiots up.” Drista replied icily, “Do you want me to delve into the heavy things right away?”

There was a lingering silence, most of them taking into account what she’d said and trying to imagine what memories would apply to them.

“That’s what I thought.”

Tommy could practically see her rolling her eyes at them. He smirked.

**The scene switched once more to a rabbit in a bushy area. It was lazily grazing around, chewing on grass and slowly hopping around. The sun shone down through spaces in the trees.**

**Without warning, the rabbit was speared by an arrow, pinning it to a tree.**

Many of them reared back at that, not expecting the jumpscare.

“Jesus...” Phil muttered.

**“Excellent aim Tommy!” Wilbur popped out from the bushes, a proud look on his face. He clapped the young blonde on the back, congratulating him. Tommy, bow in hand, gleamed up at his older brother, grinning with his braces on full display.**

**“Soon enough I’ll be shooting Sapnap and George with these eh? Not just some rabbits!” He laughed excitedly as Wilbur collected the now-dead rabbit.**

“That’s a bit dark,” Ranboo mumbled, looking slightly jarred. Tommy gave him an unimpressed look.

“We were preparing for war, Ranboob.” He snarked.

**“Right you are.” Wil ruffled his hair as he began walking back inside the walls, “you’re a good shot, Toms.”**

**“Hell yeah I am.” Tommy basked in the praise, smiling. His older brother rolled his eyes endearingly.**

Many residents of the room rolled their eyes at that as well, though not so endearingly.

**As they stepped foot inside the walls, they were met with nothing out of the ordinary. The sun was beginning to set, and the torches helped to illuminate the small enclosure they called home.**

**“Watch out!” Someone cried from above, voice cracking as they yelled.**

**Tommy didn’t even have time to look up before something slammed into his head, knocking him to the ground. He blinked blearily, ears ringing as his vision remained blurry and muddled. He tried to look around, and figure out what had happened, but he could only see fuzzy shapes before him.**

**“-ommy!”**

**He could vaguely make out more figures appearing, but still couldn’t tell what was going on.**

**“ook at- e!” There was something close up to his face, but he wasn’t able to figure out what, “-hit! Fuck!”**

“What the fuck happened?” Quackity asked, staring at the screen.

“Someone dropped a supply crate on my head.” Tommy said, pointedly glaring at Fundy. The man in question laughed nervously, giving him a sheepish grin.

“Maybe you got brain damage,” Tubbo suggested unhelpfully.

“Would explain a lot...” Jack muttered angrily.

“Unfortunately we can’t pin this guy on the crate,” Technoblade interjected, “Tommy’s always just been like this.”

A couple of them laughed as Tommy gave his older brother an affronted glare, pouting. He tried to tell himself it was banter, but deep down he knew every word that hurt even a little was meant to do just that.

**When Tommy finally regained his vision and hearing, disorientation fading, he could see Wilbur’s face hovering above his. The elder’s face was twisted with concern, tears building in his eyes.**

**“Tommy!” He cried out, noticing the boy seemed more aware finally. He wrapped him in a large hug, pulling back and immediately apologizing when Tommy winced.**

**“What happened?” The blonde slurred, bringing a hand to his head and staring in confusion when it came away red.**

**“There was an accident with one of the supply crates.” Wilbur informed him breathlessly, eyes flitting all around his frame to see if there were other injuries. Tommy managed to crane his neck enough to see a large wooden box overturned and smashed on the grass. “Can you walk?”**

**He tried to nod, growing dizzy at just that. Wilbur helped him to his feet and he immediately lurched over, nearly falling flat on his face.**

**“Fuck!” Wilbur’s hand shot out, steadying the blonde before quickly scooping him up. Tommy weakly tried to protest, blood dribbling down his face as he insisted he could walk.**

**“Dude you so clearly cannot walk.” Karl said, gesturing to the screen. Tommy looked back at him and shrugged.**

**“It’s a wonder you’re even still awake.” Sam commented, sounding slightly impressed.**

**“I’m a big man, Sam.” He grinned, “No stupid fuckin crate can take me out.”**

**“I’ve got you, Toms.” Wilbur assured, holding his kid brother tight as he rushed to the med bay.**

**When he arrived Eret and Tubbo had set up a cot, and he gently set the boy down. Perhaps one of the only benefits of an upcoming war was their abundance of medical supplies. Fundy stood nervously off to the side, tail flicking back and forth anxiously.**

**“I- I’m really sorry I didn’t mean to-” He paused as someone placed a hand on his shoulder. Eret was looking at him.**

**“It was an accident, Funds.” She smiled, “And we’ve got healing potions on hand, Tommy’ll be okay.”**

**The fox hybrid nodded, still frowning as he watched.**

"Aw, looks like you do have compassion in that little heart of yours." Puffy cooed. Fundy's cheeks instantly went red.

"S-Shut up!" He hissed.

**Tubbo finished rifling through the cupboards, finally turning back with a glowing bottle in hand. Wordlessly he handed it to Wilbur and helped Tommy sit up. The youngest was silent as he slowly swallowed, making a face at the taste which the others couldn't help but smile at.**

**With a damp cloth, Wilbur slowly began to wipe the blood from Tommy's face. The young boy didn't say a word, merely leaning into his brother's touch. Wilbur smiled softly, looking down at him like he was the whole world and more.**

Tommy shifted uncomfortably, trying to hold back the bile he felt rising.

"Feels like we're intruding on something personal..." Ranboo murmured.

**The screen had changed, now showing a sleeping Tommy in the tent. His face was relaxed, his chest rising and falling slowly as he rested his bandaged head. Just outside the tent, Wilbur stood, staring at the stars with an expression that was hard to read.**

**"He's fine, Wil."**

**Wilbur looked back at the voice, meeting eyes with Eret. He frowned, swallowing thickly. "But how long until he's not?"**

**The other said nothing, merely taking a step forward. Wil looked back out to the stars.**

**“What happens when he’s not? I mean, war is coming, Eret, and I couldn’t even keep him safe from a box, never mind the server admin and his goons...” He trailed off, looking down at the ground, “What happens when he’s not okay and it’s my fault?”**

Tommy felt sick watching, but in some sick twisted way, he wanted to laugh. It was as if his brother had predicted the future. He wasn’t okay, he was nowhere near okay.

Tommy was not okay, and yes, some of it, if not all of it, was Wilbur’s fault.

The others watched with fascination, not used to the softer side of the ex-president.

**Eret sighed, running a hand through her hair. It was hard to gauge how she was feeling with the glasses on.**

**“If that happens,” she began, “and I mean if; you do what you can.”**

**Wilbur turned to glare at her, as though she’d said the most useless thing ever, and in a way she had. Her air of nonchalance was especially off-putting.**

**“No one cares about Tommy more than you, Wilbur. You’re the closest thing he’s ever had to a father.”**

Tommy could feel Phil’s eyes drilling holes in the back of his head. He chose not to turn and face his father.

**“You’d do anything to protect him, and I know you’ll do the right thing.”**



Tommy couldn't help but laugh there. It bubbled up in his throat and escaped him without his consent. It wasn't a particularly nice laugh, it was crude and bitter, but it was one of the first times he'd laughed in a non-hysterical sense in a very long time.

Ironic, it was, seeing the two traitors speaking to each other and reassuring one another. Eret's treachery may have been of sound mind, but sometimes Tommy wonders if that made it the worse of the two.

How funny it was seeing Eret so confidently announce that Wilbur would do the right thing when he'd done the exact opposite.

"Something funny, Tommy?" Technoblade asked, a brow raised in an unimpressed matter. It seems his laugh had ticked off the majority of the room. He didn't even bother hiding his scowl at the bunch.

"No no, it's nothing." He replied, trying to keep his cool.

Both Tubbo and Ranboo seemed to be growing anxious at the confrontation, both frowning and leaning in closer to each other.

"No by all means go ahead Tommy," Phil began, and instantly the room turned cold at his tone, "tell us what you found funny."

The young blonde seized up, trying to hide his reaction. His father looked furious, though that would be somewhat expected of having to watch your least favourite son laugh at the son you'd had to kill spilling his heart out.

"Was it when Wilbur smiled at you like you were the sun?" Phil asked, glaring harshly, "Or when he nearly cried because you got hurt? Or in the letters he sent me telling me how proud he was of you?"

Shut up, Tommy's heart thrummed in his chest, palms growing sweaty.

“Do you know how much he did for you, Tommy?”

*Shut Up* , his breaths were becoming quicker, memories of Wilbur’s fists and words pointed like swords swirling around in his brain.

“He loved you so much, Tommy!”

*Shut. Up.* He brought his hands to his head, trying to cover up his distress and calm himself.

“He thought the world of you!”

*Shut. Up. Shut. Up. Shut. Up. Shut. Up.* His eyes grew wide, swallowing back tears as a menacing face he once used to trust so dearly laughed at him.

“And you don’t even want to bring him back-”

" *SHUT UP!* " Almost everyone flinched at the shriek, not having seen it coming. Many of them looked at each other in confusion, not sure how to react. Tommy was breathing heavily, grateful that the poor lighting in the room made it harder for anyone to see the tears building in his eyes.

There was a suffocating silence in the room, and you could’ve heard a pin drop.

“Tommy?” Quackity began, “Is this... Is that true?”

The boy in question looked up, and saw everyone’s faces, staring at them like they couldn’t believe it.

“The only reason we kept Dream alive was that we wanted- you wanted Wilbur back... and now you, what? You just don’t? Just like that?” Quackity sounded so hurt; so upset with him, and he wanted to cry even more.

It wasn’t just like that. He’d spent months in the void, quickly realizing that his little pipe dream of bringing back his Wilbur was a mere fantasy.

He wanted to explain, but instead, he remained silent.

“Unbelievable,” The duck hybrid laughed, shaking his head.

Tommy felt his heart drop, and he wished that word alone hadn’t hurt as much as it did, but Quackity was one of the few people he had left on the server. He dug his nails into his palms once more, and they found their grooves, accustomed to the wear and tear.

“No no no,” Jack began, shaking his head, “it’s perfectly believable, actually. Leave it to Tommy, the most selfish person on the server, to expect us to do whatever he wants! To change his ideas and opinions on a whim and leave us trying to accommodate his stupid childish needs!”

Tommy paused for a moment, taking in the other’s reactions and trying not to feel so hurt by the fact that most of them looked like they agreed, before staring at Jack.

“Fuck you, man.” He whispered, huffing out a sad, dragged-out laugh.

No one was quite sure what to say after that.

# Twisted

## Chapter Summary

Wilbur's Villainous Tendencies Begin to Show.

## Chapter Notes

quick disclaimer this fic isn't anti any character other than wilbur dream and maybe a lil bit philza and techno... (as much as i love bedrock bros techno's actions and choices when he was partnered with tommy were questionable at best and i'll delve into that in later chapters) but other than them i'm not anti any characters. they're all extremely ignorant to what tommy's been through for the most part, and they aren't intentionally being THAT malicious. they're being dicks for sure but they don't realize just how bad what they're saying is bc they dont have context and they loved wilbur. they wont just be like "oh this behavior is bordering wrong" theyre going to think back to the now dead man that they loved so much and romanticize the moments where he was alive. - 47Bats

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

**Tommy bolted through the rain, zigging and zagging through the trees narrowly. Each step was another loud splashing sound as he raced. He was panting heavily, still going as fast as he could. There was a diamond sword in his hand, gripped so tightly his knuckles were white.**

“War’s afoot.” Fundy declared, sort of a matter of fact, not exactly a jest but not very serious either.

**“Oh, Tommyyy.”**

Sapnap blinked in surprise, hearing his voice on the screen.

**The blond swiftly ducked behind a bush, putting pressure on a large wound on his thigh. The rainwater mixed with the blood, trickling down his hands as he pressed.**

**Above his head, Sapnap and George stepped into the small clearing, looking around for the boy. They were both soaked to the bone, netherite armour clinging heavily to their bodies.**

**“Did you see which way he turned?” George asked, looking at his friend. Sapnap shook his head.**

**“You look sexy as hell all wet like that.” Karl commented, head resting on Sapnap’s shoulder. The blaze hybrid smirked, laughing quietly to himself.**

***Fuck*, Tommy thought quietly to himself, gritting his teeth as he ripped part of his coat off and tied it around his thigh as tight as he could.**

**“I’d burn down the whole area if it wasn’t for this stupid rain,” Sapnap sighed, flexing out his palm and watching the raindrops evaporate on the skin, hissing as they did, “we’d find him a lot quicker.”**

**“That’d be reckless.” George muttered, squatting down to look for any tracks in the mud.**

**“It’d be helpful.” The shorter replied, looking down at his partner with a distasteful frown on his face.**

**“Don’t look at me like that.” George chastised, leaning over and hitting his friend. Sapnap laughed.**

***Idiots*, Tommy rolled his eyes, scanning the area for escape routes. He could make a run for it, but George had a bow and Sapnap had good eyes. When they saw him, and they would, he wouldn’t make it far. It wasn’t until his communicator vibrated in his pocket that he even remembered he had it on him.**

He pulled it out swiftly, reading the message he'd just received.

WilburSoot:

Where are you?

TommyInnit:

TRAPPED

MAJOR DCICKHEADS

LOOK

He craned his neck, bringing his communicator up and snapping a photo of both Sapnap and George discussing what to do.

“Why are you taking pictures of them?” Sam asked, exasperated.

“A picture’s worth a thousand words.” Tommy shrugged, as though it was the most obvious thing.

TommyInnit:

IMG.34

19.56, 65.00, -10.16

WilburSoot:

Ah. I'll send Fundy.

Knowing help was on its way, Tommy let himself relax slightly, concentrating on staying quiet and avoiding getting caught. He took a deep breath, momentarily closing his eyes before shooting them open at a loud cry.

**“Shut up!” Sapnap groaned, holding his head in his hands, “You got him with your bow so he can’t be far. I say we just split up and start looking.”**

**“If we’d brought Diane, she would’ve been able to track the blood and we wouldn’t even be having this discussion.” George mumbled quietly, frowning.**

**“I am going to kill that dog when we get back.” The pyromaniac declared, and Tommy couldn’t tell if it was a joke.**

**“You are evil.” Tubbo hissed, eyeing Sapnap.**

**Groaning silently in pain, the co-founder of L’manberg took a deep breath, closing his eyes once more.**

**“Wow.” Tommy commented, eyes wide, “I had a really low pain tolerance back then.”**

**Puffy looked over in concern. That seemed like an appropriate reaction for an adult to have to a wound that deep, never mind a child. She said nothing, planning to bring it up in therapy.**

**The scene shifted to a desaturated beach, the sun shining brightly.**

**“Memory inside of a memory,” Ranboo remarked, “cool.”**

***“Tommy!”***

***The blond looked up from where he was building, already dozens of blocks off the ground. He looked down onto the sand, seeing two figures approaching his tower. He grinned, water bucketing down.***

*“Ow do?” He greeted, braces glinting in the sunlight. Sapnap and George approached him, both smiling as well.*

*“Building another ugly tower?” George asked, looking up at the cobblestone monstrosity, “You’re gonna get banned from the server if you keep making it uglier, y’know.”*

*“Oh...” George began softly, “this is...”*

*“I am not!” Tommy stuck his tongue out at the older man. “Cobblestone is bee-you-tee-full!”*

*“Anyways,” Sapnap intervened, rolling his eyes fondly, “I wanted to uh... to say thanks. For the other day y’know?” His cheeks went red, slowly heating up enough for both the others to feel it from where they were standing.*

*“What?”*

*“I mean like-” the blaze hybrid looked flustered, “we’ve never had a fight that big and serious on the server and you really came in clutch, man. You barely even knew me but we totally kicked Dream’s ass!”*

*Tommy let out a loud laugh at that, one of his trademark sort of squeals and gasps for air that always seemed weird at first.*

*“No problem big man, I had fun.” he gave a salute, “always a pleasure.”*

*“I meant it,” Sapnap hummed, looking over at the boy. Tommy looked up with wide eyes, confused.*

*“Hm?”*



“We made a great team,” He said. Tommy nodded silently, and Sapnap frowned.

**The screen went back to the version of Tommy reminiscing in the rain. He smiled sadly to himself at the memory before curling in on himself and clutching the wound in pain. The droplets pattered down, making him shiver.**

Both George and Sapnap looked over at him, but he was adamant in avoiding their gaze, eyes locked on the screen. The two older men frowned at each other.

Tommy had looked up to them, he’d seen them as good friends, and then the war came.

“Well, that’s bittersweet.” Fundy said, trying to keep things less awkward. Thankfully, the scene changed quickly.

**Wilbur Soot was sitting quietly at his desk, going over dozens of different parchments intently. There was a lantern on his left, and it was dark and pouring out. He looked up when he heard a knock at his door.**

“Come in.”

**The door creaked slowly, Tommy entering silently. Wilbur barely spared him a glance, still going over worksheets. The light of the candle in the lantern made both their faces glow ominously.**

“All patched up are we?” The general asked. Tommy looked down at his thigh before nodding.

“Yeah...”

**They spent a moment in silence, Wilbur working diligently while his younger brother stood there, silently staring him down. Eventually, he looked up, raising a brow.**

**“Can I help you?” He drawled. Tommy scowled immediately at the tone, flipping his brother off.**

**“Fuck off ya prick,” but his confidence died down there, “I was just uh wondering if...” He paused, “if...”**

**“AwkwardInnit.” Karl snickered.**

**“If?” Wilbur implored, clearly trying to pick up the pace of the conversation. Tommy sighed, dragging both his hands down his face.**

**“Wilbur,” he began gently, “do you think people on opposing sides can... can still be friends after this?”**

**Thunder boomed outside, and as lightning came down, the entire office was illuminated in brilliant white light for just a moment.**

**Everyone in the room was able to connect the ties between the two most recent memories, and many eyes drifted to George and Sapnap.**

**For a moment, Wilbur didn’t speak. He stood, turning and looking out the window. The younger watched his back with anticipation.**

**“Tommy,” the general started, still not turning, “it’s naive childlike thinking like what you’ve just said that sometimes makes me worry about my decision to make you my second in command.”**

Tommy had to suck in a breath at that. Hearing Wilbur speak down to him like that again felt like a punch in the gut.

**The blond blanched, taking a surprised step backward.**

**“I-” He began.**

**“Are you serious about this war Tommyinnit?” Wilbur turned, pressing the palms of his hands down on his desk and he leaned on it.**

**“O-Of course Wil I-”**

**“Then don’t fraternize with the enemy.” The general commanded, eyes stone cold. Tommy nodded shakily.**

**There was a terse silence before Wilbur broke it with a sigh. He walked around the desk, hands folded behind his back as he approached the boy, getting close enough they were practically pressed up against each other.**

**“You can’t trust anyone not on our side, Toms,” He murmured, cupping his little brother’s cheek, “even after the war. It’s just not safe.”**

**Tommy hummed quietly, leaning into Wilbur’s touch as the older gently traced his thumb across his face. “M sorry Wil.” He mumbled.**

The screen went dark.

Tommy bit his tongue, turning his head away as his stomach turned. He hadn’t wanted them to see anything like that. Those were the days where it first started; where Wilbur began to sink his claws into Tommy without the latter having a single clue. Would they even notice anything amiss?

They sat quietly for a moment, before a voice spoke up.

“I remember Wil sending me a letter about that day.” Phil murmured quietly. Everyone craned their necks to look at him. He was smiling, though it seemed bitter and somewhat insincere.

“He wrote about how Tommy had almost been caught by Sapnap and George and was acting off when he returned.” The winged man swallowed thickly, “He told me how scared he was when Tommy came to him asking if they could still befriend their enemies.”

The young blond suddenly felt even sicker, realizing where his father’s story was headed. Wilbur had twisted the story. Wilbur had made Tommy seem like a foolish kid when he just missed his friends. Wilbur had made Tommy look like an idiot, and made himself look like the hero.

“It shouldn’t come as a surprise to any of you that Techno and I are well versed in war,” Phil continued, “but seeing Wilbur so mature about the whole thing, cutting friendships ties where he had to, especially with such little experience, well, let’s just say I was proud. He was always so smart.”

Tommy had to bite back an aggrieved laugh once more. You’re right, he was so fucking smart. Smart enough to make himself the hero even in this situation, it seemed.

“Even if it meant making himself the bad guy in your story, Tommy, he was doing it to protect you.” Phil told him. “You always had such a big heart, y’know? Wilbur had to be the villain, you had room for everyone in there and it just wasn’t safe.”

God, the old man could not have been more wrong. Wilbur had done those things to make him dependent. Wilbur had done those things to scare him into being loyal. Wilbur had done those things because he was a villain.

“Well, room for everyone except Wilbur, I guess.” Niki muttered, arms crossed. Tommy froze.

“Niki, that wasn’t very-” Puffy began, but was interrupted.

“The fuck did you say?” Tommy demanded, eyes ablaze.

“Oh don’t act like you’re surprised we all noticed,” Niki scoffed, “you don’t care about Wil. I wouldn’t be surprised if you never did.” She was so angry at this kid. This kid had gotten all of Wilbur’s love and devotion and still chose to resent him. This kid who had gotten to be Wilbur’s everything and didn’t even want to bring the man back.

“Niki that’s uncalled for,” Ranboo said quietly, “you saw how they acted in those memories you don’t get to say something like that.”

“Ranboo I don’t think this involves you.” Jack interjected. The enderman hybrid blinked, not expecting the confrontation.

“This doesn’t involve any of you.” Tommy ground out, trying to keep himself in check.

“Oh right! I forgot! It’s just about you!” Niki laughed, “It’s always about you, isn’t it, Tommy?” she hissed, fists clenched. Tommy stared at her, wondering where it went so wrong. Niki had always been like an older sister to him, she’d always meant the world to him.

He didn’t know when she decided the feeling wasn’t mutual.

He wanted to cry, if he was being entirely honest, but fuck that. It hurt so much seeing someone he cared about say those things to him, but he took that hurt, took that pain, and turned it into anger; something he knew all too well.

“You can go fuck yourself, Niki.” He growled, “All of you can go fuck yourselves.”

“And the child lashes out immaturity again,” Techno rolled his eyes, “what a surprise.”

Ready to start screaming and kicking, Tommy was on the verge of just going into a fit of fury when someone else spoke up.

“Oh shut the hell up Technoblade!” Quackity stood, turning to face the piglin hybrid.

The rage Tommy had been feeling suddenly dissipated as he watched his beanie-clad friend snap at his brother. He’d thought Quackity was mad at him, so that made no sense, obviously.

“Or what? I thought you were mad at Tommy anyways.” Techno retorted.

“I’m mad he’s keeping things from me, I’m not mad at him.” Quackity said, angrily gesturing to the blond, “Yeah, I think I deserve an explanation or something but I also don’t think you need to talk about him like that.”

“Like what?” The pink-haired man raised a brow.

“Like he’s not your equal.”

There was another silence, Tommy thought there’d been too many of those since they started watching. He almost wanted to laugh. He’d thought Quackity hated him, but surely someone who hated him wouldn’t stand up for him like that, right?

“I don’t know what you’re talking about Quackity, but Techno doesn’t do that.” Phil spoke up, looking a little too defensive over his eldest given the circumstances.

“Just keep pretending you don’t see it, Phil.” The duck hybrid laughed somberly, shaking his head as he sat back down.

The room fell back into an uncomfortable quiet once more.

**A loud siren sounded as Tommy made his way through L’manberg. His eyes were wide with anticipation, practically raring to go.**

“Ah,” Fundy hummed, “the final battle.”

“Well... It was supposed to be final.” George muttered.

**Arriving at the base of the wall, he was met with the faces of everyone else. Wilbur stood at the forefront, and when he saw Tommy he made his way over. He looked completely composed, his uniform neat and tidy as ever.**

**Wordlessly, he reached out, straightening Tommy’s hat and smoothing out his uniform. He smiled gently, almost sadly at his baby brother.**

“He was always so gentle with you,” Tubbo hummed, “like, like, you were his biggest weakness or something.”

*I was his biggest weakness, Tommy thought bitterly, not wanting to voice his opinion to the audience, because he couldn’t bear the thought of me leaving, of me not needing him.*

**“Gentlemen.” Wilbur began, standing tall and proud, “In my old inapt age, I’m not a particular asset in hand-to-hand combat. That’s why I’ll be on the sidelines, feeding you information through an outsider’s view.”**

**“Tommy.” He said, facing the youngest seriously, “I’m putting you in charge of these men. I want you to lead them into battle.”**

**Tommy's eyes lit up with wonder, mouth hanging agape. *He trusts me*, he thought incredulously to himself, *he actually trusts me*.**

“Of course he trusts you, what the hell are you talking about?”

Tommy didn't know how they couldn't see, how they didn't notice. Wilbur's tact was making Tommy feel like Wilbur couldn't trust him. He made Tommy feel small and helpless, making him dependent. That was why ensuring the men to him was such a big deal. It was such a grand gesture because Tommy finally felt like maybe he'd done something right; that maybe by following Wilbur's every command he could feel that burst of joy again.

Deep down he knew, he knew exactly why they couldn't see. They were all blinded by their love for Wilbur. Even the ones who'd never known him that well still knew the idea of him well. Wilbur was a saint, a man who had built a country for freedom, a man who had built a country to keep his little brother safe, and a man who was wrongly ruined by war.

Sometimes Tommy would wonder if war was what Wilbur had wanted all along; if his older brother could've truly ever enjoyed L'Manberg, if there wasn't bloodshed in the midst, if it wasn't a prize of war.

“Nothing,” he bit out, “fuck off.”

Chapter End Notes

next chapter; final control room & the duel :)



# Eret; Thy Name is Betrayal

## Chapter Summary

the worst hour of my life so far - tommyinnit (pre-exile, pre-pogtopia, pre-pandora's vault)

## Chapter Notes

goddd the last chapter was such a flop n i really wanted to make this one better but it still feels rushed to me T-T sorry u guys im trying i swear

also this chapter contains graphic depictions of death and blood so please be warned. (i mean it)

Also Also i did make Tommy 14 during the war for independence, do with that what you will. he's currently sixteen as they watch.

-47bats

**Their breaths came quick and short as they hurried through the tunnel. They could barely see, stepping on each other's heels every now and then and bumping into one another. The walls carved of stone were smooth and finished, proving whoever had mined down that far had been in no rush.**

“Kinda scary watching this from the third person.” Tubbo noted, more interested than anything, though Tommy could see the slight tremor in his hands and knew the memory still haunted him to some degree.

“Wasn’t it scary in the moment?” George asked.

“Not really,” Tubbo shrugged, “I trusted Eret so I wasn’t worried.”

“L.” Fundy said, earning a gentle smack from Phil.

**“Where the hell are you taking us?” Tommy groaned from the back of the line, tired of his nose ramming into Tubbo’s soot-filled hair each time the latter stopped abruptly. Eret didn’t reply, merely leading them deeper in.**

**Finally, Blackstone came into view, and the five L’Manbergians stepped into a small room decorated with chests and signs.**

**“This is the control room,” Eret said, making room for them all to look around, “the final control room.”**

“Cozy.” Ranboo remarked, earning a snort from both Tubbo and Tommy and a roll of the eyes from Fundy.

“Kill yourself.” The fox hybrid replied automatically earning a loud guffaw from Ranboo.

**“What!?” Tubbo laughed incredulously, looking around in wonder before Wilbur, Fundy and he ran over to the chests. Tommy grinned before looking down at a button on the ground.**

**“What does this button do?” He asked, not giving time for Eret to reply before pushing it.**

Tommy groaned, putting his head in his hands as he mourned his common sense for a thousandth time. Tubbo smiled sympathetically, reaching behind his husband to put a hand on Tommy’s shoulder before freezing. His hand fell back down as he saw the way the blonde bristled at even the insinuation of being touched, and tried to play it off.

“No worries big man,” he assured, “someone was going to press that button regardless.”

**For a moment, nothing happened, and Tommy frowned. Wilbur looked up from where he was sitting. “There’s nothing in the chests-”**

**Pistons were activated and from behind the walls came Dream and his comrades. They unsheathed their swords and with the element of surprise got the upper hand. Tommy looked up in horror at Eret who, to his dread, was smiling.**

**The blond turned his head in time to see Tubbo try and block Sapnap’s blade, head falling to the floor moments later as his eyes remained wide with shock. To his left Fundy was speared through the throat by George, choking momentarily before collapsing.**

**Tommy locked eyes with Wilbur, horrified as the older man’s body went still, sword poking out of where his heart was, before his eyes glazed over and he fell, still staring blankly at his little brother.**

**Before Tommy could blink, they were all dead, and Dream himself had put his blade through Tommy’s chest. He fell onto the Blackstone, gasping for air as fluid entered his lungs.**

**With what little he had left, he managed to look over and see Eret standing proud.**

**“Down with the revolution boys.” They grinned.**

**Tommy choked as blood pooled in his throat, desperately panting and trying to breathe.**

**“It was never meant to be.”**

**His head fell slack, thumping on the ground as blood dribbled out his mouth.**

*Tubbo was slain by Sapnap.*

*Fundy was slain by George.*

*WilburSoot was slain by Punz.*

*Tommyinnit was slain by Dream.*

There was a very long, appalled silence. Everyone stared at the screen in shock, not having words for the situation.

Tommy knew that was the most brutal moment in their history. Sure, L'manberg had been blown to dust before, and sure, Wilbur had been stabbed and killed by his own father, but nothing could compare to the pure animosity in the bloodshed that day when they lost their first lives.

The silence was finally broken as Tubbo gasped for air, sounding panicked. Karl had to stand, running to a corner of the room and emptying the contents of his stomach.

"Tubbo?" Ranboo asked, turning so he could better see his husband, "Tubbo can you hear me?"

Fundy began to sob, lip spurting blood where he'd been biting it in a desperate attempt to stay calm. Phil turned to his grandson, at a loss for words as he tried to tend to him in an almost catatonic state.

Many other residents of the room were merely only capable of staring into space, unable to form coherent sentences or react.

"Tubbo breathe with me, it's alright," Ranboo tried to comfort, cheeks burning as he wept to himself, taking deep exaggerated breaths for Tubbo to follow. The image of his husband's

disembodied head was burned into his brain, and no matter how hard he tried he couldn't stop sinking into pure panic.

Sapnap and George could only sit in silence. They'd seen the bloodshed firsthand, seen it done by their hands. It didn't feel very different the second time around. The bloody corpses had plagued their nightmares enough times for the memory on the screen to be a familiar old foe at that point.

As the entirety of the room was in complete disarray, Techno stared, puzzled, at Tommy.

The blond was silent, merely sitting there, looking unfazed.

Technoblade could remember that room well. He knew it as the room he'd escaped from, and hadn't understood Tommy's reaction when he showed it to the boy. Now though, now he knew what Tommy had been reliving when they stepped back into the room.

Tommy couldn't bring himself to cry. He couldn't even bring himself to panic. He just felt... angry. Every time sadness or despair swirled around inside him he took it and he turned it into rage, it was all he really knew. He supposed it must have been more traumatic for Fundy and Tubbo, watching themselves die in the third person so brutally when Tommy had already seen that the first time around. Watching your own head roll to the ground was sure to be an experience, and he was quite familiar with waking at night screaming Tubbo's name, those same horrified empty eyes in his nightmares.

Still, Tommy could not bring himself to cry. Everyone around him was in varying degrees of complete madness, but he just felt... angry. And he was used to being angry. He was used to blood, he was used to watching his loved ones die, and he was used to being betrayed. Watching it all over again just made him angrier, and he knew anger well, he knew how to sit in his anger.

"What the fuck is this, huh!?" Quackity shouted, staring up at the ceiling, "Is this some sick fucking joke?"

As he yelled, Puffy and Ranboo were still desperately trying to calm Tubbo as Sam and Phil worked tirelessly to ease Fundy's sobs.

"You can't just show people this shit." He seethed, "That's not fucking okay!"

There was no answer.

"Don't fucking ignore me!" Quackity cried, growing even angrier.

Tommy looked up halfheartedly, trying to push down his rage. "Drista?" He called.

"Yes, Tommy?" The god replied immediately.

"...Why are you doing this to us?" He asked finally. By that point, most of the room had quieted, and he'd noticed Karl's vomit had 'magically' disappeared thanks to his omnipotent friend.

Wordlessly, Drista appeared in the room once more, floating before Tommy.

"I'm not doing anything to you," she said, "I'm doing this for you, Tommy."

"I-It's not okay, Drista." He laughed, brows drawn together, "These are... these are things we worked hard to forget and move on from."

"But you didn't." She replied. "You didn't move on. You say you forgot but maybe that's the problem. You all keep repeating the same vicious cycle, can't you see? Nothing's changed since what I just showed you."

Tommy swallowed thickly, trying to think of how to explain it to someone so detached from human fragility.

“We don’t... We can’t just rewatch the things that broke us.” He said, “It’s only going to break us more.” And major credit to him because personally, he thought he sounded quite mature and profound, he’d never been one for words but that was a proper sentence right there if he knew one.

Drista was silent for a moment, and he thought he might’ve actually gotten through to her, that they might’ve found their ticket out of the awful room from hell.

“Well maybe this time when you rebuild yourselves you’ll get it right.” She declared simply, disappearing from the room in the blink of an eye without another word.

Tommy stared in shock at the spot she’d once resided in before descending into a swirl of threats and profanities.

“Drista you bitch!” He cried, “Come back here right fucking now!”

“Mans is threatening a god.” Tubbo huffed out a laugh, sniffing quietly as he regained his composure.

“Drista I will never fucking speak to you again if you don’t let us out immediately! I mean it!” He intimidated, still looking up.

“No, you don’t.” She replied curtly, seemingly perfectly unbothered. He sighed, sitting back down and carding a hand through his hair. He looked around the room, and everyone seemed to have at least somewhat recovered. He made sure to look over Tubbo a second time, assuring himself his friend was alright.

Without much else to do, they went back to staring at the godforsaken screen.

**“I’m here to negotiate the terms of our surrender,” Wilbur announced, Tommy obediently at his side as they stared down Dream.**

Tommy tried to suppress another flinch at the sight of the man. It helped that the Dream who had beaten him to death had been wearing a prison uniform and no mask, but it did nothing to ease the memories of exile.

“This is biased as fuck.” Fundy announced, “We kicked ass in this war and it’s only showing our losses.”

“That is true.” Tubbo nodded, “We won two of the battles and I don’t see any of those memories on the screen.”

Tommy dug his nails into his skin, memories of freezing beaches and explosions ringing through his mind.

**“You fought well.” Dream nodded.**

Tommy visibly curled in on himself at that, though thankfully no one was paying attention to him. *Calm down. Calm the fuck down. He’s not even here you pussy. It’s a memory.* If he freaked out the others would surely take that as a chance to strike him or take advantage of him, just like Wilbur and Dream had. He couldn’t lose his cool. He had to keep his composure no matter how badly he wanted to break down.

**“Oh shut up you egotistical green bastard!” Tommy yelled, jumping in front of Wilbur with all his childlike energy, “We fought incredibly!”**

**“You fought incredibly,” Dream repeated, seemingly not bothered, “but we fought better.”**



“He wouldn’t be saying that if he hadn’t wrapped his slimy little hands all over Eret.” Tubbo muttered.

“All’s fair in love and war.” Techno supplied unhelpfully, earning a glare from the president of Snowchester.

**“Y’know what, Dream?” Tommy began, inching even closer as he sized the other up, “Why don’t we have a little fight? A little one-on-one? Toe to Toe?”**

**“Tommy,” Wilbur hissed, trying to pull the other back, “Tommy calm!”**

**“Let’s go, Dream! Me and you!” The child spat, hopping with unbridled rage and excitement. “Let’s have a one v one! A duel!”**

**“Tommy your passion will get you nowhere...” Wilbur advised, growing more panicked as the blonde slipped even further from his control.**

“Ever the fighter.” Puffy laughed, though Tommy noted it didn’t sound bitter or annoyed, it almost sounded... fond. But that was absurd.

“Maybe if he thought before he acted or spoke we wouldn’t all be here.” Niki muttered quietly. Tommy turned to her, rebuttal in his mind before realizing he really didn’t think before he did things. He turned back, grumbling quietly to himself.

**Tommy suddenly realized his outburst, silencing and looking at Wilbur in fear for just a second before regaining his composure.**

**“I promise you, Dream, this man does not speak for me.” The general announced.**

**Tommy looked back at their country before leveling Dream with a hardened stare. “You and me, ten paces, half a heart. For the ownership of L’manberg.” He declared.**

**“Tommy we need you alive.” Wilbur frowned, putting a hand on the shorter’s shoulder. Behind him, Fundy and Tubbo were at a loss for words.**

**“I have to do this, Wil.” Tommy replied, eyes ablaze.**

**“Your life is worth more than the revolution.” His older brother insisted, still trying to get him to back down.**

Tommy knew he’d meant it. He knew Wilbur needed Tommy more than he needed L’Manberg, but it didn’t feel like that big of a win. Perhaps it was because he knew that Wilbur needed to *control* L’Manberg, and he knew that in that same sense, Wilbur needed to control Tommy as well.

**“If you win,” Dream cut in, standing adjacent to them, “you get independence. However, if you lose, you don’t get independence, and I get Mellohi.”**

**For just a brief second, Tommy’s face morphed into that of surprise, before he schooled it once more. He looked back to Wilbur, who was watching worriedly, to Tubbo, who looked hurt that Tommy was doing it without consulting him, to Fundy who seemed anxious beyond belief, and then to L’Manberg. Memories of fonder times flashed through his mind, Tubbo and him playing in the fields, sharing stories around the fire, playing in the river. He nodded.**

**“I agree.”**

**“Okay no,” George shook his head, “someone has to tell me what is up with these discs cause I still just don’t get it. Why do they matter so much?”**

**“There’s only two people they matter to.” Jack hissed, “Dream and Tommy.”**

“I don’t know what could possibly make some vinyl more important than the server but those two have proven time and time again they’re willing to risk anything and everything for them,” Niki said, “it’s stupid, really.”

Tommy frowned, simmering in their words. It was true that at the beginning the discs had been nothing too special. Sure, they meant quite a bit to him but he’d never prioritize a life over them, and he’d proven that when he’d given both of them up for L’Manberg. What the others didn’t seem to understand was that they gained significance along the way. It went from a little game with his friend Dream to his abuser dangling his most prized possessions over his head, taunting him. He had too much pride to let them go in the beginning, and if he was being honest, it was fun, but by exile it was different. He couldn’t let Dream have the discs because they were his and Dream had never let him have anything of his own in exile. Dream had taken his sane, loving brother, Dream had taken his country, Dream had taken his best friend, Dream had taken everything, but Tommy couldn’t let him take the one thing he had left. He couldn’t let him take his discs.

**The scene changed to Tommy and Wilbur standing before the Prime Path, conversing silently.**

**“Do I shoot him or do I aim for the skies?” Tommy whispered, glancing over at Dream.**

“Hold on,” Karl spoke up, “you were considering purposely missing- wait did you purposely miss!?”

“No,” Tommy shook his head, “no I aimed for him I’m just a shit shot.” He informed them, smiling weakly.

“Why the hell would you call for a duel and then aim for the sky?” Sapnap questioned.

Tommy frowned at that, lowering his gaze. “I didn’t want to kill someone...” He murmured.

“But Dream had just killed you,” Puffy pointed out, “it would’ve just been revenge.”

“I was fourteen, Puffy.” Tommy laughed, “Still had me braces and I was supposed to be killing someone? It just... didn’t sit perfectly right with me...”

None of them quite knew what to say to that, never having been tasked with killing a man so young themselves.

**“Tommy I want you to do whatever your heart says you should do.” Wilbur replied solemnly.**

“And your heart told you that you should shoot him?”

“My heart’s still telling me to shoot him.” Tommy seethed, taking the others aback at the raw hostility in his tone, a controlled sort of rage much unlike his usual anger.

Tommy nodded silently, swallowing thickly and making his way to the spot beside Dream, bow in hand. The masked man waved at him as he approached, almost as if he was mocking him, and Tommy scowled.

**“Gentlemen, you know the rules.” Wilbur said, standing tall across the waterline. His face was grim, staring at Tommy.**

**There was a silence, both duelers nodding without saying a word. Tommy took a steadying breath, trying to keep his hands from shaking. Wilbur raised a hand in the air.**

**“One.”**

**Tommy took a step forward, bow in hand and arrow nestled snugly in it.**

**“Two.”**

**Another step. *I'm scared*, he thought quietly to himself, *I don't like this*.**

“Dude you chose that.” Sapnap gestured at the screen.

“Well *excuse* me for making decisions and saying things without thinking them all the way through you prick.” Tommy glared, “I was bloody pissed and high on the war, and then *BAM!* Suddenly it hit me that I was probably going to lose another life right there.”

“*You knew you were going to lose!?*” Tubbo’s head snapped over towards the blonde, sizing him up, looking to be on the precipice of anger. Tommy’s eyes widened, throwing his hands up in alarm.

“Woah! Woah there Tubzo I didn’t say that,” he shook his head, “I just meant like... the odds weren’t *really* in my favour, y’know?”

Tubbo took a steadying breath, grabbing his husband's large clawed hand for support before leveling Tommy with a stare that sent chills down his spine.

“Of course *I* knew that,” the goat hybrid began, “but I didn’t think *you* knew that!”

“...What?”

Tubbo sighed, massaging his temple. “I thought you were just being stupidly optimistic again, yeah? I thought y’know, my best friend sure gets himself into a lot of trouble, but he’s always so sure he’ll make it out just fine!” He frowned at Tommy, something indecipherable in his eyes, “but you *weren't* sure... and you did it anyways.”

The others in the room watched silently, not knowing what else to do.

“Well... Well yeah!” Tommy laughed, exasperated, “it was for L’Manb-”

*“Your life was worth more than L’Manberg, Tommy!”* Tubbo cried, interrupting his best friend. The latter reared back, shocked at the passion in his friend’s voice.

“Tubbo...”

“Wilbur said it himself...” Tubbo whispered, teary-eyed, “We would’ve rather not gained independence and kept your second life but you went and you lost it and- and- and do you know how hard it is for me? You keep *dying*, Tommy...”

Tommy flinched, sucking in a sharp breath. His nails dug into his palms again, trying to match Tubbo’s gaze. He frowned, not quite sure what to say.

Wordlessly, he turned back to the screen, trying to ignore his best friend’s eyes staring holes into the side of his head.

The memory started back up.

**“Three.”**

*I have to make Wil proud. I have to save his country.*

**“Four.”**

**Step. For Wilbur.**

**“Five.”**

**Dream straightened his mask as he walked, an air of nonchalance to him that seemed almost too easy.**

**“Six.”**

**The masked man stepped forward, glancing over at his three friends who were watching, though none of them seemed particularly worried.**

**“Seven.”**

**The sun was beginning to set, a warm glow settling upon the server as it basked in the final moments of warmth.**

**“Eight.”**

**Tubbo grabbed Fundy’s hand, gripping it tightly.**

**“Nine.”**

**Tommy took another step, holding his head high.**

**“Ten paces, fire!”**

**Both men swiveled around immediately, releasing their arrows. Tommy narrowly avoided the shot by Dream, firing again as another arrow came his way. The people on the sideline watched with anticipation as the server admin just barely missed getting pinned by Tommy’s shot.**

**But it was over with Dream's second arrow. It came hurtling through the air, nestling itself deep in Tommy's chest as the young boy gasped. He fell hard onto his back, staring up at the golden sky. Around him, he could hear screams. Some of them were excited and in celebration, while others were in horror and agony, but everything was muffled, and his vision was rapidly dimming.**

Technoblade whistled lowly, a sort of impressed sound. "Two deaths in what? An hour? Forty-five minutes? That's gotta be like... a record."

"Get fucked." Tommy muttered, anxiously rubbing the scar where the arrow had pierced his skin. He hated this. He hated watching the memories over again. He hated it.

**"Tommy!" Wilbur cried out in terror, watching his younger brother crumple to the ground. He swiftly leaped over the gap, racing over and kneeling at his side. He lifted Tommy's head, placing it in his lap as he stared down, the boy's breaths coming in laboured wheezes as blood trickled down the corner of his mouth. He didn't look scared, only... sad.**

**He gave a mournful smile up towards his big brother, trying to grin as wide as possible and in the process showing off his braces now painted in blood, (god he was so *young*) "Sorry... Wil..."**

**And just like that he vanished into thin air, leaving nothing but a pool of blood on the path.**

They stared, feeling uncomfortable with the teen only meters away from them, watching alongside them. In moments like that it was hard to ignore just how young Tommy had been. Seeing how small he was, and how he looked up at his older brother, all made it more... real.

"Well I, for one," Fundy began, "did not like watching a fourteen-year-old smile in death."

Tommy couldn't help but laugh at that, ignoring the stares. He grinned at the fox hybrid cheekily, earning a scowl.



“You shouldn’t have apologized, Tommy.” Sam interjected, frowning.

“He was apologizing to Wilbur.” Phil explained, “for putting him through watching that.”

“An apology wasn’t necessary,” Sam pressed, and many of them could feel the tension in the room grow awkwardly.

**Tommy awoke with a gasp, rocketing into a sitting position as he felt aimlessly around his chest. His hand settled on where the arrow had been as he breathed heavily. He looked up, noticing he was back in L’Manberg in his bed. Wilbur, Tubbo and Fundy were by his bedside, watching him nervously. He looked over and noticed Punz standing in the doorway, waiting expectantly.**

**“Dream wants to talk.” Was all the man said, gesturing for Tommy to follow him.**

**Tommy stood, leaning on Wilbur for support for a moment as his body readjusted to reforming, and calmly made his way out of the cabin, following Punz.**

“He didn’t even give you a moment!” Puffy cried, staring at the screen clearly upset, “You just respawned and he’s just standing there like some weirdo!”

Tommy laughed quietly to himself, finding comfort in the older woman’s apparent concern and grandiose reactions.

**They walked in silence, leaving L’Manberg and the others. Tommy trailed awkwardly behind Punz, stumbling every now and then as his legs adjusted still. The latter didn’t look back once.**

**Eventually, they reached Tommy’s house, and Dream stood outside, waiting. Tommy smiled tiredly.**

**“Ow do?” He tipped the man off.**

**“Why don’t you come inside, Dream? We’ll have a little talk, me and you.”**

**Tommy stepped into the house, Dream going after him. Sapnap, George, and Punz made a move to follow but Dream stopped them, signaling for them to wait outside.**

**The blonde teen made his way over to his chests, sighing deeply. He stood for a moment, completely silent as Dream watched him. When he finally looked up the masked man hadn’t moved an inch.**

**“Dream...” He began steadily, “I am willing to give you Mellohi *and* Cat in exchange for L’Manberg’s independence.”**

**“Ohhh, the horror...” Jack commented sarcastically. Tommy sat in his rage, choosing not to act on it for the moment but flipping the bald man off all the same.**

**Dream took a surprised step back, as though he couldn’t believe it. “Wait... What?”**

**“Both my discs, you can have them.”**

**“Hmmm... That is an interesting deal y’know?” Dream grinned from behind his mask, snaking closer to Tommy and placing a hand on the boy’s shoulder.**

**Tommy physically recoiled at the scene, biting his tongue so hard it drew blood as he tried to keep himself grounded. *Don’t touch me Don’t touch me Don’t touch me get your fucking hands off me I don’t want to be touched by you I-***

**“That’s very selfless of you.” Dream cooed, a smile evident in his tone, “I mean, those are your discs.”**

Techno narrowed his eyes at that. He could see for himself the way Dream was trying to place a wedge between Tommy and L’Manberg.

**Tommy swallowed thickly, mustering all the strength he had to hold his head high.**

**“It’s for L’Manberg.” He insisted.**

The screen went dark, and Tommy took a deep breath, bringing his feet up onto the edge of his seat and drawing his knees close so that they were tucked into his chest.

“Well Dream’s word doesn’t mean shit so I’ll say it again,” Quackity started up, “that *was* selfless, Toms.” He grinned.

A couple of people looked as though they wanted to argue, but the duck hybrid sent menacing glares their way.

“Totally dude,” Karl nodded, “I mean, I don’t get the whole disc thing, but they clearly mean like, a *lot* to you. So that was really cool of you.”

Tommy felt his cheeks grow red at that, not used to open praise. He scowled, looking away.

**Tommy trudged back into L’Manberg, his feet heavy and his eyes half-lidded. He was practically dragging himself, his entire body slumped with his regular energy gone, but when he saw three figures rapidly approaching, he quickly straightened, pasting a large grin on his face.**

**Wilbur got there first, slightly out of breath. His eyes scanned Tommy over for any injuries, before he placed a sympathetic hand on his little brother’s shoulder. “How’d it**

**go?” He asked.**

**Tommy waited a moment, allowing Fundy and Tubbo to fully arrive, both looking worried. He smiled wide, eyes crinkling.**

**“Boys,” he began, opening his arms wide as if inviting in the praise, “I got us our independence.”**

**Jaws dropped, all of them staring at him as if he had just walked on water.**

**“W-What?” Wilbur stuttered, unbelieving.**

**“How!?” Tubbo cried.**

**“I gave him the discs,” Tommy smiled weakly, “both of them...”**

**There was a moment of silence, the darkness of the night encapsulating them all before;**

**“Tommyinnit my right hand man!” Wilbur whooped, sweeping Tommy up in his arms and holding him up. Beside him Fundy and Tubbo cheered like children, jumping excitedly. Tommy laughed, feeling the wind in his hair as his brother held him.**

**It wasn’t a perfect moment; L’Manberg was still in need of reparations, and he’d just come back from death twice. Eret had left them in the dust, and he’d lost his discs.**

**But in those minutes it all felt okay.**

**With the lanterns glowing and the cheers of his comrades, he felt like everything was all okay.**

“And they all lived happily ever after.” Fundy snarked.

Tommy and Tubbo snorted.

If only that hadn’t been just the beginning.

# Descension

## Chapter Summary

the final moments before pogtopia - also papa puffy & protective karl + quackity

## Chapter Notes

ok ngl i totally hit a wall here with like. this Entire chapter and had to really force myself through it. despite the election being one of my favourite arcs i just could not for the life of me write it out so that's why this chapter is so short unfortunately. ALSO. i meant to update this yesterday night so my apologies.

((Disclaimer: I did not initially expect this big of an audience when I wrote this fic. It was supposed to be the most self indulgent thing in the world and I didn't think that many people would read it. I Was Wrong. When starting off with this story I was essentially just toying around with darker themes and 'what ifs'. This characterization of c!Wilbur is NOT to be taken as canon interpretation. Very sorry for any people upset with my portrayal of him, this was just a 'hey. what if the RP was a bit darker and more realistic/graphic. From this point on he becomes a much more exaggerated and violent version of himself. I also started writing this fic when I was very new to the fandom and I Regret That. Anyways thank you, and you can keep reading now.))

~ 47bats

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“I wish we had some snacks or something,” Sapnap whined quietly to himself. George gave him an amused glance.

“Hey, Mrs. God?” The blaze hybrid called up to the ceiling, “Do you have anything for us to eat?” He asked. Many others around the room snorted or huffed amusedly at that.

There was no response.

**“Rude...”**

**Wilbur stood tall on a large tower in the now-rebuilt L’Manberg. It was night, and the country spread out much further than it had before. The buildings below them were glowing warmly.**

**“Tommy,” he began, turning to the boy standing quietly at his side, “I have a plan.”**

Tommy couldn’t help the smirk at those words, knowing exactly where it was headed. *Try telling me Wilbur’s a saint after this Phil, I dare you.*

**“L’Manberg needs leadership, that’s a given.” He hummed, staring out onto the horizon.**

**“That’s why they have you, Wil.” Tommy supplied, ever the diligent little follower.**

**“Yes, but the people and I don’t have a connection.” Wilbur shook his head, “they need to be sure in their hearts that I’m correct for this role.”**

**Outside the walls, a pack of wolves descended on a sheep and her child, tearing them to pieces. Wilbur watched without reaction, staring intently as the canines feasted.**

**“Tommy we’re going to have an election.” He declared, moonlight casting a shadow on the side of his face Tommy could see.**

**“An election?” The blonde asked, brow furrowed.**

**“An election.” Wilbur affirmed, nodding.**

“Hey, this means a bunch of us have joined!” Quackity exclaimed happily, “I’m so ready to see myself kicking ass in HD.”

Niki was glaring at the screen, arms crossed bitterly but also... her face seemed almost sad.

**“I run for president, someone as my vice, of course,”**

The pink-haired woman grit her teeth, clenching her fists.

**“and we don’t tell anyone else there even is an election!” Wilbur spread his arms out wide, a hint of something not quite him in his eyes. “Along comes voting time and, oh, look; there’ll be no one to vote for but myself!”**

*“I knew it!”* Quackity leapt from his seat, eyes wide with vindictive glory. “I knew that goddamn election was a sham from day one!”

Everyone else watched him, some amused, some bored.

“You done?” Karl grinned.

“Absolutely not,” Q shook his head, “I kept telling everyone ‘Wilbur is trying to run a one-party system under the guise of democracy’ but *nooooo*. It was always ‘*Oh Quackity! Wilbur Soot would never hurt a fly! He’s impartial! He just wants what’s best for L’Manberg!*’ ...” He took a deep breath, seating himself.

“I hope you all feel like massive idiots right now.” He declared coolly, hands folded neatly in his lap.

**Tommy said nothing, only staring at his older brother, face impassive, before breaking into a grin.**



“Tommy!” Puffy cried, for some reason shocked that he’d do such a thing; as if he didn’t have an awful track record of doing underhanded things just for the fun of it. He grinned sheepishly.

“Government corrupts.” Technoblade said dryly.

“To hell with you!” Tommy replied, “I’ll have you know I was just as corrupt *before* becoming vice president thank you very much.”

Many people in the room raised a brow at that, giving him an unimpressed look. He faltered, smiling nervously.

“Anyways it was Wil’s idea,” he shrugged them off, “bad role model or whatever.”

Phil frowned, not sure what to make of that statement or the most recent memory in general. Wilbur wouldn’t... he was a good kid he wouldn’t just rig an election that... that wasn’t like him.

**“Well that’s just brilliant,” The blond laughed, “let’s rig an election!”**

“Oh Tommy,” Sam sighed, putting his head in his hands. Tommy laughed loudly.

**“No no,” Wilbur shook his head, “no we’re not rigging it.” He denied, “It’s just that they won’t be able to vote for anyone other than m-”**

**“LETS RIG THIS BITCH!” Tommy cried excitedly, jumping up and down.**

“You are fourteen years old,” Tubbo scolded, “have some class.”

“Like Wilbur.” Ranboo nodded.

“Wilbur doesn’t have class, he just lies.” Tommy informed them. “S’not my fault he likes being all high and mighty. At the end of the day, our actions here were the same.”

That was a key thing Tommy had noticed, actually. Tommy and Wilbur had both done morally wrong things, but Wilbur had always been adamant with his silver tongue that he was actually in the right. He’d always made others believe it, but looking back, Tommy wondered if he’d believed it himself as well.

At least Tommy had no problem admitting he was in the wrong (sometimes); Wilbur was *convinced* he could do no wrong, always twisting words and such to make himself look better.

**“Tommy,” Wilbur began tiredly, seeking after the young boy bouncing around ahead of him, “Tommyinnit.”**

**Tommy looked back, still smiling. “What’s up?”**

**The president stopped in his tracks, waiting for the young boy to notice and stop too. He took a deep breath.**

**“I want you to be my running mate.” He said, “I want you to be my vice president, Tommy.”**

**The blond looked back, tilting his head like a confused dog. Eventually, he broke out into a wide grin. “Poggers.” He gave a thumbs up.**

Niki couldn’t suppress a groan of frustration at that. How easily Tommy had brushed off such a large gesture sent her into fits of madness. Many others looked over to see her hunched

over, stewing angrily.

“Something you would like to share with the class, miss Ninachu?” Tommy asked, a shit-eating grin on his face. Ranboo rolled his eyes, trying to telepathically signal to the other that egging the woman on was probably a bad idea.

“Yes, actually,” Niki began, lips twisted into an ugly frown, “You didn’t deserve that. You didn’t deserve to be vice president.”

“Niki I don’t know if you know this but I actually happened to lose the election,” Tommy laughed, “I wasn’t vice presi-”

“*Shut up,*” Niki hissed, “you are so *annoying!* You shouldn’t have been chosen for the role of vice president! Wilbur should have known better he-”

“He just chose someone he trusted is all, it wasn’t a big deal-”

“*Then why didn’t he choose me!?*” Niki cried, voice cracking. It was silent for a few moments before she dissolved into sobs, burying her face in her hands, “Why didn’t he pick me?” She whispered hollowly. “Even once?”

The others watched sadly as she sobbed, long mourning cries of a man already mourned too many times.

“Well, that’s obvious innit?” Tommy said, tone light as if it was a casual discussion. People in the room looked at him, waiting for him to answer. He was smiling, though the look in his eyes was hard to decipher.

“He cared about you too much.” He laughed, turning back to the screen and avoiding everyone’s gazes.

Niki looked up, eyes wide and sniffing, trying to understand what the boy meant. She wiped hastily at her eyes, the confusion of his words bringing her rage and sadness to an abrupt stop. She straightened, lost in her own head as she contemplated Tommy's answer.

The rest of the group had no idea what to say.

**The screen shifted to a small cramped office, reminiscent of Wilbur's quarters during the war. There was a large window, much like the first, and a swiveling chair before it. Tommy was leaning back comfortably, hands behind his head as he did loops in the chair, humming to himself contentedly with his eyes closed, a small smile on his face.**

**The boy opened one eye as he heard the door creak open, turning round to face the entrance and sitting up straighter.**

**Wilbur made an entrance, scrolls of parchment in his arms and a terribly withered disheveled air to him. Tommy gleamed up at the scarily tall man, flashing a peace sign.**

**"What's up Wil?" He greeted, leaning over onto the desk with his elbows and framing his face somewhat adorably.**

**"For someone rigging an election you sure are cute..." Puffy muttered. Tommy grinned.**

**Wilbur set down the scrolls on the desk, letting them sprawl out messily. He carded a hand through his hair, sighing loudly. He looked as though he'd been up all night.**

**"Things aren't going smoothly, Tommy." He frowned, eyes flitting over a specific paper he had rolled out. The blond curiously peeked over, trying to get a glimpse of what the older was reading before Wilbur gave him an unimpressed glare and he backed down sheepishly.**

**"In what way?" Tommy asked, "You gotta give me some context!"**

**Wilbur ran both hands over his face, half groan-screaming as he did. He massaged his temples, going over the notes again, and the Not-Wilbur look was once again visible in his eyes.**

**“Coconut2020.” He hissed, like the name was acid in his mouth, “They’re doing well.”**

**“Well they did offer free cookies,” Tommy laughed, not noticing Wilbur’s irritation at his antics.**

**“That’s not the only thing,” Wilbur smacked another piece of paper, “Swag2020 is also doing... good. Too good...”**

**“Eyy! Big Q!” Tommy grinned, hair bouncing happily, “good for him!”**

**“Aww Tommy!” Quackity smiled. The boy in question blushed.**

**“Tommy!” Wilbur cried loudly, slamming his hands down on the desk and scaring the younger. Tommy was taken aback at the loud noise, the smile slipping from his face instantly.**

**“S-Sorry Wil...” He laughed nervously, “I’ll be more serious.”**

**“Thanks.” The president replied dryly, seemingly unimpressed and still rather cross with him. Tommy curled in on himself without even really realizing.**

**“He shouldn’t’ve yelled at you like that.” Puffy’s nostrils flared at the memory. She’d never met Wilbur and he seemed kind from what she’d seen, but she didn’t appreciate anyone talking to Tommy like that.**

“They’re brothers,” Phil interjected, “it’s normal for them to get frustrated with one another.”

“Not like that...” The sheep hybrid frowned. Phil leveled her with a glare.

“Oh I’m sorry, are you their parent?” He asked, not trying to hide the bite in his tone. It was evident the past few memories had put him much more on edge.

“Someone has to be...” Puffy muttered bitterly. The bird hybrid’s eyes widened, wings flaring as he stood.

“What did you say?” He asked, voice dangerously level.

“It’s nothing,” she shrugged, “just you know... If I *was* their parent, I probably would’ve acted more like it. Showed up when they needed me, you know?”

“You *bitch*. ” Phil hissed, face the angriest any of them had ever seen it, “I’d like to see you raise three boys on your own!”

“But you didn’t,” Puffy refuted, “you raised one. Hi Techno.” She waved cheekily, only further aggravating the winged man more. Techno waved back silently.

“I did my goddamn best,” Phil growled, “I was the best father I could manage to be.”

*“Then where were you when Tommy needed you ?”*

The room quieted at that, and a couple eyes turned to look at the blonde in question, but Tommy was staring at Puffy, eyes wide with wonder.

“Tommy?” Phil looked slightly taken aback, “when did he ever need me?”

“He’s your son!” Puffy cried, shocked, “he always needed you!”

“If he needed me he would’ve told me,” Phil rolled his eyes, looking over at Tommy, “right?”

Tommy frowned, swallowing thickly. He crossed his arms, biting his lip. “Yeah.” He managed, trying to sound as sure as possible.

“See?”

“Oh go fuck yourself Phil that was so clear!” Puffy’s speech faltered as she felt a hand on her forearm. She looked down to see Sam, clearly signaling for her to cease. She frowned.

“I think that’s enough,” Techno commented, “we should just let the magic god screen do its thing. Who knows, it might prove one of you wrong, but we’d have to keep watching to know.”

“Fine.” Puffy huffed out, seating herself, “But I’m not taking back what I said.”

“Wouldn’t expect you to, hag.”

*“I’m younger than you!”* Puffy swiveled around, craning her neck to look at Phil who was smiling down at her.

“Guys.” Sam sighed, looking on the brink of something awful.

“Sorry…”

The two seated themselves, though Puffy could feel Phil glaring holes into the back of her head. She frowned, ignoring him and turning her head to look back.

“Jack, you’ve been uncharacteristically quiet,” She noted, “is there something wrong?”

The man in question smiled weakly, thinking back to the glares he’d been receiving from Quackity every time he *considered* opening his mouth, looking over at the man who was staring back, practically daring him to speak. He shook his head. “Nope! Everything’s good in Manifold-land!” He laughed anxiously, sweating bullets.

Puffy gave him an unimpressed glance, telling him she didn’t believe *shit*, before turning back to the screen.

**Tommy panted loudly, giving his all as he and Wilbur raced through the dark forest. Overtop of their L’Manberg uniforms they wore large cloaks, obscuring their identities as they ran deeper and deeper into the woods.**

**When they finally stopped to rest, both of them looked heartbroken.**

**“We’re banished...” Tommy whispered, tears building in his eyes, “From our own nation. That- Wilbur that’s *our* nation!”**

“Huge L to you both.” Quackity laughed loudly, “Now you’re homeless!”

“That was so insensitive Big Q, I am going to cry now.” Tommy huffed, tilting his nose up in disdain.

**They walked over to a small dirt hill, chatting absentmindedly about things they missed already. Tommy began to dig out a little cave-like den in the hill, much like his first home.**



“What is it with you and hobbit houses?” George asked, confused but smirking all the same.

“Cozy.” Tommy shrugged.

**“Wilbur c’mere.” Tommy motioned, waiting for his brother to approach. He placed a sign on the outside of the house, writing on it ‘Home’. “I’ve built us a house.”**

**“It’s pathetic.” Wilbur snorted, amusedly stepping into the tiny little den.**

“He’s not wrong.” Techno said, “I remember that dingy little place. It sucked.”

“It did not suck!” Tommy cried, offended.

**They spent a couple of minutes silently crafting and setting up chests inside the house. It wasn’t until Tommy heard an odd clanking that he looked over, eyes widening dramatically.**

**“Wil...” He whispered, shocked.**

***The* Wilbur Soot was dressed head to toe in diamond armour. He was frowning, looking worn down and ruined.**

**“In all my time on this server, I have *never* worn armour,” He muttered, “but now? Now I have no choice.”**

“Honestly never thought I’d see the day.” Sapnap muttered as everyone thought back to how adamant Wilbur had been about *not* wearing armour.

**“We’re on our own, Tommy.” Wilbur sighed, looking up at the blond with that same haunting stare from the night before, “Just you and me.”**

Tommy frowned, hugging himself. Pogtopia, even the idea of it, was *not* pleasant. The things he’d gone through within that cramped crevice, the thing he’d watched his older brother degrade into, he would never forget.

Unfortunately, no one in the room, not even Tommy, was prepared for what was to come next.

## Chapter End Notes

i love villain jack but i also love that he is extremely easily intimidated i think its so fucking funny that he has murder on his mind but one wrong look can send him spiraling and that hes scared of everything. also a personal favourite of mine has always been the feral boys interacting with tommy so rest assured you will see LOTS of that as we move along.

next chapter things are going to get heavier (finally!!) and i'm very excited to write about it T-T.

& JUST TO CLAIRFY I DONT HATE C!PHIL.. i think his actions ARE somewhat understandable from a sort of deluded point of view. he's convinced himself that everything is fine with their little family and that his dead little middle child was perfect in every way shape or form simply to cope and also because of the terrifying amounts of guilt he feels. anything good wilbur might've been is amplified 10x in his grief-riddled eyes and the blame he feels is IMMENSE. so he harbors resentment towards himself and it manifests in unhealthy ways. he is not excused though and i cannot WAIT for him to get a taste of his own medicine cause MAN. he is going to have to pick up his jaw off the floor after next chap.

HUUUUGE thanks to all of u for the support on this fic! if u want to talk abt it u can @ me on twitter or if u have any constructive criticism or ideas i'd love to hear them too!! see u guys soon!

~47Bats

# Chirp

## Chapter Summary

puffy starts noticing some HUGE red flags with wilbur's behaviour + the final setup before c!phil loses his fucking mind at what he sees

## Chapter Notes

HIIIIII apologies for yet another short chapter but this one sort of ended itself T-T it just felt right to end there especially with what's coming so i let it be lol... anyways! hopefully u guys like it bc next chapter is going to be... intense... and Long...

~47Bats

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Throughout the ordeal, Niki had been... conflicted. Originally she'd thought she'd been dreaming when her vision went dim and she found herself trapped in a room with other members of the server, but memory after memory had proven the entire thing to be painstakingly *real*. Fortunately for her, she had yet to be featured in any on-screen memory and was silently thanking the gods.

No, it seemed the main attraction and center of it all was none other than TommyInnit. The name left a bitter taste in her mouth, and though she'd been working on moving past these things, the resentment she harbored towards him was not something that would simply vanish overnight.

Obviously, Ranboo had been lying to the syndicate about Tommy's death, as he sat a few rows ahead, surprisingly docile. Of course, she didn't blame Ranboo, bless his soul, but she found herself not sure what to make of the 'death' of Tommy. She hadn't really cared, if she was being honest. Call it denial or apathy or whatever you want, it hadn't done much to her.

Believe it or not, not *everyone* on the server's worlds revolved around the kid.

She didn't need to think about that. She'd started baking again, she'd built a new base, and she'd started *healing*.

And then she'd shown up in the godforsaken room from hell and seen *him*, and everything had come rushing back. It was always about Tommy, wasn't it? Even in a situation so out of the ordinary, he was still the focus. Wilbur chose him. Wilbur had always chosen him.

Tommy's words had perplexed her, however, and she found herself dwelling on it as she sat. Niki looked over at the boy again, and he seemed... different. Different from five minutes prior, even. Like a bucket of water had been dumped over his head and this newer, duller Tommy was revealed to the world.

Had he looked like that from the moment they stepped foot in that room? Longer? She didn't know. She wasn't sure.

*"He cared about you too much."* The boy's words bounced around in her mind as she tried to decipher what he'd meant. The statement had caught her off guard, and she wasn't really sure what to say or if she should even bother speaking at that point. Why had he sounded so... defeated?

"How many of these things do we even have left?" George asked, looking perplexed, tearing Niki from her thoughts.

"When do we get to leave?" Tubbo whined, leaning on Ranboo's side.

"The last memory you will be shown happened this morning," Drista chimed in unhelpfully, "so buckle up losers."

Tommy laughed at that, earning a few glares as others broke out into unhappy protests. Their complaints went unanswered, however, and they forced themselves to accept their fate in the dastardly chairs.

They settled in, staring ahead.

**Wilbur sighed tiredly, dragging his feet through the grass as he slowly made his way back to their tiny shelter. There were large bags under his eyes, sagging down as if they had the weight of the world upon them. His hair was unkempt, messy, and shoved angrily into a grey beanie. Gone was his revolutionary uniform, instead, he adorned a large trench coat, making him look all the more deranged.**

**As he stepped foot in the sad little dirt house, Tommy looked up at him. The blond was kneeling down at the furnace, placing some iron inside while humming to himself quietly. He wore a long sleeve white shirt, his trademark tee overtop. Wrapped around his neck was a green bandanna, tattered greatly but still intact all the same.**

“Glow down.” Fundy piped up from the back, grinning.

“Fuck off ya prick.” Tommy replied, throwing up the middle finger without even bothering to turn around.

**“Hey Wil!” Tommy chirped excitedly, standing and dusting himself off. The man in question smiled, though it came out as more of a grimace than anything. “What’ve you been up to?”**

**“Hello, Tommy.” Wilbur greeted, “Same as usual. Grinding for resources. Hating Schlatt. Grinding for resources. Wanting L’Manberg back.” His tone had turned rather bitter near the end.**

Tommy winced, smiling nervously. “Y-Yeah... It’s no fun out here...”

**Something about that statement appeared to make the elder change. As Wilbur glanced over at his younger brother, his eyes glazed over. Tommy, who had gone back to shuffling through inventory, didn’t notice.**

**“It’s your fault we’re out here, Tommy,” he began, tone laced with something indescribable, “I don’t want to hear you complaining.”**

**“Harsh...” Sam noted.**

**“It’s not your fault Tommy.” Puffy huffed angrily, “Don’t listen to him.”**

Thank god for Puffy, the youngest managed a small smile. He didn’t want to break it to her that he’d spent *years* listening to Wilbur.

Phil apparently had decided to remain silent.

**Tommy looked up at that, brow furrowing as he cocked his head. “My fault?”**

**“*You* invited Schlatt onto this server.” Wilbur hissed, shoulders hiking up, “ *You* did this to us.”**

**“Now hold on a second,” Tommy frowned, trying to bite back any anger in his tone, “ *You* were the one that started this whole election. How in god’s name is this *my fault?* ”**

**“Everything’s your fault, Tommy.” The former president growled, and there was no joking air, Wilbur was being dead serious.**

Hurt flashed in Tommy’s eyes for a moment as he took a step back, before he hardened his gaze, gritting his teeth and taking two forward. “Just where do you think you get on telling me off like that? That’s a real dickhead move you kn-”

**“Shut *up* !” Wilbur groaned, throwing his head back, “You are so goddamn annoying! I can’t pretend to like you right now, Tommy.”**

The blond faltered, eyes growing wide. He opened his mouth to say something but nothing came out. Wordlessly, he turned, going back to counting inventory, ignoring the sinking feeling in his chest.

Wilbur pulled out his communicator, going over things nonchalantly as if he hadn't just broken his little brother's heart in two.

"Let's not fight," Tommy whispered after a few minutes of silence, "we only have each other."

Wilbur frowned, eyes flitting over to the blond. "Yeah," He sighed, shoving his hands into his pockets, "yeah whatever."

"That was... not nice." Tubbo decided on finally, "like, at all."

"He was just stressed is all," Tommy jumped in, defending Wilbur without even really registering it in his mind, "it was my fault anyways."

"It wasn't your fault though?" Karl tilted his head.

"Regardless of whether he's stressed he shouldn't take it out on you." George pointed out, disapproving of the entire interaction.

"Oh like you've never snapped at someone," Techno rolled his eyes, "and it's *Tommy*; he's insufferable. That's like, just a fact."

"And Wil wasn't just stressed," Niki urged, "he was dealing with a *lot*."

"It's a wonder he didn't freak out on you earlier." Jack shrugged towards Tommy.

Puffy, who had been stewing angrily in her seat, shot up at that. “What’s the matter with you guys!?” She demanded, “Do you hear yourselves right now?”

The sheep hybrid turned to Tommy, who had been watching silently, face impassive. “Everything is *not* your fault, Tommy.” She insisted, “He was wrong then and he’s wrong now.”

“Well Wilbur’s always wrong,” Tommy snorted, rolling his eyes as he tried to lighten the mood. Puffy frowned at that, no doubt noticing how adamant he was when it came to deflecting any sort of serious conversation that he could deem ‘emotional’ or ‘pitying’. She sighed, sitting down.

**“Anyways,” Wilbur muttered, looking over at Tommy’s hunched form, “you had something you wanted to tell me?”**

**The younger visibly brightened at that, as if he’d brushed the whole affair just moments before completely to the side. He nodded enthusiastically, grinning. “Uh-huh, uh-huh!” He jumped to his feet, moving over to his jacket hung on the wall. Wilbur watched wordlessly as he fished around in the pockets, until finally pulling out a crumpled piece of parchment.**

**“Jesus,” Wil laughed, “is that a letter? Who sends letters in that condition?”**

“Off the top of my head, I could name two...” Karl said, pointedly glaring at his two fiances who laughed sheepishly.

“Paper bends and tears easily,” Sapnap insisted, “not our fault.”

**“Well... it wasn’t exactly like this when I got it...” Tommy admitted, laughing nervously.**



**A murky memory of the letter before was shown. It was in pristine condition, perfectly creased with elegant handwriting on both sides.**

“What the hell did you do to that letter?” George laughed, earning a glare from Tommy.

“N-Nothing!” He protested, cheeks growing red, “I just shoved it in my pocket and it happened to come out like that!”

George laughed at that, definitely not believing him for a second.

**“Our brother actually.” Tommy tilted his head up playfully, and Wilbur cocked a brow.**

**“You’re talking to Techno again? What about?” The former president moved over to the table, absentmindedly shuffling through papers.**

Technoblade remembered the few months when Tommy had been ignoring him. It had something to do with him breaking one of Tommy’s things the last time he’d visited. It was stupid, really.

**“About us, obviously!” Tommy laughed, “I asked him to come visit!”**

**Wilbur went very still at that, pausing in his movements as he craned his neck to look at the younger. He did not look amused, nor excited like Tommy had anticipated. A wave of silence washed over them for just seconds, but for the two it stretched on for eons; Just the sound of the wind in the trees and the birds chirping outside.**

**“You what?” Wilbur asked finally.**

The piglin hybrid frowned at that, not sure what to make of that reaction. Wilbur hadn’t acted anything out of the ordinary when he’d arrived. Sure, he was... crazed and odd, but not to Techno specifically.

Tommy smiled nervously, not quite understanding the fear that washed over him in that moment. He clutched the letter a little tighter, wishing for his eldest brother silently.

“I uh... I told him we were in a bit of a rough patch. You’re really going through it big dubs so I figured who better to help you than your very own twin-”

Tommy was interrupted as his older brother slammed his hands down on the table, figure hunched and shadowed. The former blanched, rearing back as Wilbur was suddenly in his face, inches away.

“I don’t want to see Technoblade right now,” Wilbur smiled, both his tone and expression screaming ‘*danger!*’, “I don’t even want to see you right now.”

Puffy let a dangerous sneer fall over her face, watching the memory with clenched fists. As time passed she was beginning to like the Wilbur fellow less and less. Stressed or not, *no one* got to talk to Tommy like that.

Tommy tried to smile, placing his hands up in surrender, “I-It’s all good!” He laughed, voice trembling, “By the time he arrives you’ll already be over this little grumpy phase...”

Wilbur gave him a pointed glare, backing up and heading towards the door. He swung it open violently, stepping out into the autumn winds. “I’m going out.” He muttered angrily, “Don’t wait up for me.”

The door slammed shut, making their little home shake, and dirt loosened from the roof, falling unceremoniously onto Tommy’s head. With that, he was alone, standing small. He sighed, moving over to the wall and sliding down it, pulling his knees up to his chest.

“I miss Dad...” He whispered quietly.

**The screen went dark.**

“Tommy...” Phil began quietly, not quite sure what to say. Wilbur hadn’t done anything *wrong*, per se, but he didn’t know the youngest had felt like that.

“That’s awkward,” Tommy grimaced, laughing quietly, “bit of an embarrassing moment eh?” He avoided everyone’s gaze, pointedly staring at the ground.

Thankfully, another memory started up before anyone could get another word in.

**It looked to be night, Tommy was hunched over at the table, hands clasped tightly. The torches around him dimly lit the area, and he looked to be alone in the abode.**

***Idiot! Why did you invite Techno without asking Wilbur first? Now he’s mad. He hates you. He doesn’t trust you. I wouldn’t trust you after that either. You-***

**Tommy’s bitter internal monologue was cut off abruptly by the sound of the front door creaking open. With a speed that could’ve given him whiplash, he looked up at the entrance, watching with devout anticipation.**

**Wilbur stepped in, as tired and worn down as he had been when he left. His face was somber, brooding, and shadowed. Tommy lit up at the sight of him, running over and nearly jumping at him. He bounced on his heels, gleaming up at the older man.**

**“Wilbur!” He cried excitedly, “You’re back!”**

**The man in question removed his coat, placing it on the wall and staring down at Tommy as though he was judging him silently. “Yeah?”**

**“Well, it’s just that...” Tommy faltered, some of the excitement leaving him at the look, “it’s been two days...”**

**“He left you for two days?” Sam asked.**

**“I’m not a fuckin baby.” Tommy rolled his eyes.**

**“Well, you properly upset me.” Wilbur glowered, not looking impressed in the slightest. Tommy shrunk under his gaze, frowning.**

**“I’m sorry Wil, really! I’ll never invite anyone here again without your permission! I won’t, I promise!”**

**He didn’t need to ask where the elder was. It would probably only upset him more. It was none of his business.**

**Wilbur softened at that, smiling gently after a few moments. He reached out to the younger, cupping his cheek. Tommy instantly melted, leaning into the touch and practically purring. “I’m sorry Toms.” He whispered, pulling Tommy into a hug, “I shouldn’t have snapped at you like that. I was upset about a lot of things and I took it out on you.”**

**Tommy said nothing, merely soaking up the contact, burying his face in Wilbur’s chest.**

**“Can you ever forgive me, Tommy?” Wilbur asked, running his hands through the blond’s hair.**

**“Course I can...” Tommy mumbled, voice muffled as he pulled in even closer to his brother, “M just glad you’re back. ‘S not your fault. It’s mine.”**

**Wilbur grinned at that, a dark look in his eyes, though Tommy couldn't see it from where he was. They continued hugging, silently holding each other, and Wilbur's grip just a little too tight to be normal.**

Tommy frowned, taking a deep breath as the screen faded to black. Despite it all, he felt himself grow... sad.

When was the last time he'd been hugged?

He crossed his pale arms, grateful for Ranboo's sweater as he was frozen to the bone even with it. He shivered, rubbing his arms in a sad attempt to warm himself.

Still... he couldn't shake the sickening pit building in his stomach.

Puffy was silently stewing, dread growing deep inside her. She wasn't sure how much any of the others were able to pick up on, especially through Tommy-hate-tinted goggles, but what she'd seen on screen was *not* an example of any type of healthy relationship.

Tommy was reliant on Wilbur in those memories. He doted on him without even realizing it, thinking he was still 'Big Man Innit' while chasing after his older brother. He craved Wilbur's validation desperately and was adamant about earning the man's respect and trust.

"Tommy..." Puffy began nervously, grabbing everyone's attention, "Did Wilbur ever... hit you?"

There was silence in the room, and many people seemed to grow angry at her words. Phil and Niki in particular looked ready to start another fight.

"Okay that's enough," Phil shook his head, "Wilbur would *never* hit his brother."

"Look at that!" Niki gestured to the screen, "he loved him!"

Puffy opened her mouth to object, to point out the clear red flags in Wil's behavior, but was interrupted by quiet laughter.

The people in the room looked over to Tommy, who was chuckling. He grinned at Puffy, rolling his eyes. "As if," he dismissed, "Wilbur couldn't lay a hand on me if he tried."

Puffy frowned at that, wanting to go over to him. He was smiling, the familiar air of confidence (trademark Innit Incorporated) he always had, but it felt... shaky.

"Honestly," Phil shook his head, "it's like you have it out for him. How many more times do we have to say that my boy was a good man?"

Puffy looked over at him, and for the first time, she *really* looked at him. She stared into his eyes and was met with a desperation she scarcely ever saw. Phil was *scared*. He was terrified that with each new memory would come another part of Wilbur he never knew, never bothered himself to know, and would have to face the truth. Philza had never really known Wilbur, and he was terrified of that fact.

She softened, feeling... sad for the man. "I'm sorry." She backed down, much to everyone's surprise, "I'll let the screen do the talking."

Sooner or later, Phil was going to have to come to terms with it, and soon enough he'd see Wilbur as someone he truly didn't recognize. Puffy didn't have to make him feel that prematurely.

## Chapter End Notes

thanks so much for reading!! please read warnings for next chapter i'll have them in the beginning notes as things are... not gonna be pretty  
~47bats

# Revelations

## Chapter Summary

trigger warnings: psychological verbal and physical abuse

## Chapter Notes

HIHI I MEANT TO UPLOAD THIS YESTERDAY SO SORRY T-T the end of this chap rllly isnt my fav i think it rllly could've been done better but at the end of the day this is a fanfiction about minecraft roleplay so i'm really not going to lose sleep over it

anyways the support on this fic is AMAZING so thank you all so so so much. without further ado, i present to you: the chapter where it all goes downhill

~47bats

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Phil had been... struggling; To put it lightly.

*Wilbur was a good man*, was something that rang constantly in his mind. Stained with both pride and remorse, he clung to that thought with what little sanity he truly felt like he had, but the more memories he watched, the more the statement began to feel like a question.

Phil's youngest was sitting far from him, nearly in the farthest possible seat. Coincidence or not, it stung slightly. Tommy was... different. He was still loud and rude, but somehow simultaneously more quiet. He took up less room, it seemed.

Before... well... before a *lot* of recent things, Tommy had quite literally been the room itself. He never hesitated to make himself known, always inserting his little head in conversations that didn't concern him and drawing attention to himself and his family in the worst ways possible.

Phil hadn't been around a lot when Tommy was growing up, but when he first adopted him the kid was a blur of red and yellow. Constantly climbing things and nearly cracking his skull open at a moment's notice, escaping his crib no matter *how* Phil modeled it, somehow fleeing the house dead in the middle of the night simply because he saw fireflies outside his window and had decided he needed to see them then and there. Philza always smiled looking back at memories of his youngest. He was pretty sure he'd gone nights without sleep with the little one a constant danger to himself and others, but every time he felt frustrated he would just look at that little face and his heart would *melt*.

"*No one knows Tommy like I do,*" he used to laugh, holding the baby close as the twins played outside. They'd been too young to remember their brother at that age and didn't pay as close attention as Phil did, too caught up in their own adolescent lives.

Sitting there, in the stuffy, uncomfortable room, though, Phil knew that it had become quite the opposite. No one knew Tommy anymore, that was for sure, but least of all his father. He could no longer claim with absolute certainty that Tommy's favourite color was ocean blue, or that his favourite food was toast with strawberry jam, or that he liked to name the spiders he found outside because he just didn't *know* anymore. Children change as they grow, and where Phil had once known his son inside and out, he found himself completely out of his depths.

Tommy was... a stranger.

And Phil hadn't realized it till then.

Of course, he'd left with the very intention of *protecting* Tommy and Wilbur, but he wondered if at some point he could have returned more often, or perhaps just shortened the length of their trips, but his guilt for being away so long only kept him out longer.

Perhaps his excuses and reasonings were merely the rambling and musing of a guilty conscience; one he hadn't ever wanted to face.

Phil took a deep breath, schooling his features. Puffy's... implications were throwing him off. He was losing his cool and he needed to keep it together. Wilbur was good. Wilbur was *good*. Wilbur was a good person. Wilbur was loved. Wilbur was loving.



*And you Killed him. It's your job as both his father and his murderer to protect his honor.*

Techno watched his father with pointed eyes, trying to catch his every movement. The piglin hybrid could sense Phil's inner turmoil and felt guilt brewing inside him. He quickly shut it out, not willing to ever face that side of himself. And yet, despite his insistence on not getting caught up in his own mind, Puffy's words plagued him.

*"Did Wilbur ever... hit you?"*

Phil's response had been thorough disgust, but at that moment Technoblade had frozen. There was a specific instance in his mind, one that had him swirling in despair, despite never having pondered on it before that moment.

*"What happens in the pit, stays in the pit."*

Forget Wilbur, *Techno* had hit his younger brother, and more than once. In the moment it hadn't felt wrong; hell, even months later he couldn't care less. But there was something in Puffy's tone, something deeply afraid, that seemed to force him to think back on that moment.

...Had he been in the wrong?

He remembered Tommy's bitter snarl, the way the kid had been *beyond* enraged with him... but had he taken it too far?

Technoblade cleared his mind, willing the dark thoughts away. What was he doing? Stewing quietly over something that had happened months before and never been brought up again? Clearly, if he'd truly fucked up, then Wilbur or Tubbo would have said something. It was fine. There was no use dwelling on it.

“Oi ya fucking cock,” Jack called out, “can’t see the screen now can I?” He gestured to where Tubbo was standing, directly in front of the screen as he reached towards the ceiling, fingertips pointed outwards.

“Relax Jack,” Tubbo snorted, bending down to touch his toes, “I’m just stretching. Besides, the next memory hasn’t started up yet.”

“You look like a fuckin idiot you do.” Tommy grinned, laying back comfortably in his seat. Ranboo snickered quietly to himself.

“When you’re old and your bones don’t work for shit don’t come complaining to me,” Tubbo snarked back, twisting and turning still, “you won’t be able to escape me then.”

Tommy blinked at the implication, his smile slipping from his face. Beside him, Ranboo laughed harder, and Tubbo turned his attention to the tallest.

“That goes for you too, Ender boy,” he cracked his neck side to side, “I’d like to see you run from me in thirty years seeing how shit your posture is now.”

Ranboo’s laughs quieted, and he instantly shot up, back going ramrod straight. Almost immediately, he felt a gentle tapping on his shoulder blade. He looked back to see Quackity, trying to reach the top of his shoulder, looking at him.

“Down in front please.” The duck hybrid called in a high-pitched voice, grinning. George, Sapnap, and Karl all burst into laughter around them. Ranboo sheepishly hunched back over on himself, grinning nervously. Tubbo and Tommy both let out loud laughs.

“That’s enough boys,” Puffy rolled her eyes endearingly, “back in places. The next memory will be any second now.” She was smiling softly at the trio. The tense air in the room had seemed to somewhat lift, and despite Drista’s promise of the ordeal dragging on, some of them were beginning to feel more optimistic.

**The narrow and jagged walls of Pogtopia spanned across the screen. The twisting spirals of stairs without barriers were shown as two figures slowly made their way through the small crevice. It was rather dark, with few torches to illuminate the entirety of the place.**

**Tommy trailed behind Wilbur nervously, shoulders drawn as he hugged himself as tight as he could. His eyes were flitting around, scanning the area back and forth. He gently tipped his diamond helmet upwards so he could see better, frowning. He looked cold, jacket forgotten upstairs in their little shack of a home.**

**“... Did we have to choose somewhere so... tiny?” He called faintly, brows drawn together in a pinched expression. His unkempt hair poked out messily from all sides of his helmet, making him look a bit more crazed. The walls felt like they were closing in on him. He hated it.**

Techno watched, eyeing the screen wearily. He'd never liked Pogtopia. It was... eerie. It felt like it was changing his twin bit by bit. The longer they spent in there the more Wilbur seemed to descend into something... less human. The more days they called it home the more Wilbur adjusted to the dark. Wilbur had become... part of Pogtopia, but what was Technoblade if not a loyal brother? He'd stood by Wil, even in complete insanity.

The insane Wilbur had actually been quite fond of Techno, and maybe that had half-blinded him. There was something abashedly comforting about a Wilbur that didn't denounce him, that actively praised his indulgences in the voices. He'd spent so many years afraid of breaking his twin, so it was almost... a relief that someone else had done it. He was ashamed to say it looking back, but a part of him had *liked* the not-Wilbur. Maybe he'd just been so tired of being 'the violent twin' and 'the crazy one' that he'd actually *embraced* the degraded version of himself Wilbur had been in his final days.

Selfish... wasn't it?

**Wilbur let out a long-suffering sigh, throwing his head down. He whirled around, jacket flaring out as he spun. The bags under his eyes had worsened, they were critical and narrowed, much of their love long gone. His lips were turned into a bitter frown, curved sharply. In his left hand, he held a cigarette, half-smoked already.**

**He took a drag from the stick, letting the ash fall to the ground. He paused for a moment before exhaling, most of the smoke billowing up into the high ceiling area of the ravine.**

Phil blinked, eyes wide. Wilbur had smoked?

**“Look Tommy,” he began, voice rough, “I know you’re claustrophobic, but we can’t make sacrifices for your personal comfort. This place is perfect!” He threw his arms up wide, spinning in a circle. “Techno’s already got a lovely synthetic farm going, it’s all great!”**

**Tommy glared, hugging himself tighter. He looked tired as well, with large bruises beneath his eyes. “You’re a massive dickhead.” He hissed.**

**Wilbur chuckled, throwing his cigarette to the ground and stomping it out. “I’m just going with whatever works best!” He looked back to see his younger brother staring up at him and his face softened, “You’ll be fine, Toms,” he assured, “promise.”**

**Tommy smiled shakily, giving a halfhearted thumbs up, though the minute Wilbur turned his back the smile slipped from his face and he scowled, flipping the older off.**

**Wilbur didn’t notice, parading off into the shadows with intention.**

Sapnap let out an amused huff, watching the two bicker. Tommy was always so expressive and never hesitated to voice his opinion. It had become a bit comforting in the first months of the server, and he’d grown accustomed to it.

**“Fuckin hate it here...” Tommy muttered, face sour as he kicked a rock at the wall. The rock bounced back, hitting him in the shin. He let out an affronted cry, clutching his leg and hissing profanities at the wall.**

A group of them laughed at his antics, amused by how comical his behavior was.

“Stop laughing you pricks!” Tommy chastised, face growing red.

The screen went dark and they all readied themselves for whatever was next. It seemed Drista was perfectly fine showing them short clips, as long as said clips had meaning. For example, no one had failed to pick up on the fact that the main purpose of the last memory was to portray Tommy’s distaste for Pogtopia and to set the scene for future events.

Bit dramatic of her, but whatever.

**Tommy was standing idly just outside the dirt home, neck craned down as he stared at his communicator in hand. It looked to be midday, and he was frowning deeply at the sun in his eyes as the long blades of grass tickled his ankles.**

**Tubbo\_:**

**can we talk?**

**TommyInnit:**

**idk**

**wil says we aren't supposed to**

**what if Schlatt catches you**

**He hesitated momentarily in his typing, sighing and running a hand through his hair. He looked out into the distance, in the direction of L’Manberg, before looking back down.**

**TommyInnit:**

**I just dk if we should risk it**

**Tubbo\_:**

but i haven't talked 2 u in forever :(

Tommy laughed at that, quickly going to reply when he heard the door slam beside him. Wilbur strode out, shoulders tense. He instantly turned to Tommy, eyes wide.

“Tommy!” He cried, reaching out and snatching the communicator, “What the hell are you doing?”

The blond blinked in surprise, quickly moving to defend himself. “I was jus-”

“You were talking to *Tubbo*? ” Wilbur practically spat, not looking over as his eyes scanned through the message logs, “I told you not to!”

Tommy winced, reaching out before letting his hand fall. “I- I know Wil but it’s just hard and-”

“What if Schlatt had seen? Hm?” Wilbur cut him off, taking three large strides forwards and into Tommy’s personal space, “What if he’d seen his right-hand man talking to mine? Can you imagine what sort of advantage we’d be losing if he figured out?”

Tommy’s concerned face only worsened, and he took a quick breath. “I-”

“Do you know what might happen to Tubbo if Schlatt found out?”

He stopped at that as if just realizing the danger Tubbo was in as their spy. He could seriously get hurt if he was found out.

“What if something happened to him because of *you*, Tommy?” Wilbur asked, volume lowering but tone staying accusatory, “What would you do then?”

**Tommy blanched, looking to be in some sort of panic. He was beginning to sweat, looking more and more alarmed as Wilbur continued to stare him down.**

**The wind blew through their hair, and Tommy swallowed thickly.**

**“I... I don’t know.” He admitted finally, looking scared. Wilbur nodded curtly, grip tightening around Tommy’s communicator.**

**“If you want to put yourself at risk that’s one thing,” he began, “but your behavior makes you a danger to others. It’s selfish, Tommy.”**

**“What the fuck is he talking about?” Tubbo demanded, looking at the screen perplexed, “I’m the one that texted first!”**

**“He was probably just misreading the situation,” Tommy laughed nervously, “I- uh- He was just worried about you, Tubs.”**

**Tubbo frowned, feeling somewhat uneasy about the entire thing.**

**“I’m sorry Wil,” Tommy whispered, eyes downcast. “Really I am.”**

**Wilbur smiled at that, relaxing. His tense hold on the communicator loosened somewhat. “I know. All that matters is that you understand what you did was wrong, Toms. I’m not a villain here I just... I *worry*, y’know? I- I worry about you and Tubbo. You’re just kids I mean, how can I expect you to stay out of danger?”**

**Tommy looked to be deeply ashamed, nails digging into his palms. “I’m sorry for making you worry, Wil.” He mumbled.**

**“Just don’t do it again.” Wilbur relented, “That’s all I ask.”**

**Tommy nodded mutely, still looking down. Wilbur placed a firm hand on his shoulder. “I’m going to keep this for a while,” he held up the communicator, “just until I know I can trust you with it again.”**

**“Course Wil.” The younger nodded, “Whatever you think is best.”**

**The grip on his shoulder grew tighter as Wilbur beamed, the screen going dark.**

“He took your communicator?” Ranboo asked, looking concerned.

“Well... y’know...” Tommy gestured towards the screen, looking embarrassed, “I deserved it.”

“Uh no?” The enderman tilted his head, “And like, there’s nothing a player can do to warrant getting their communicator confiscated. That’s a rule on every server. He isn’t allowed to do that.”

“He’s my...” Tommy paused for a moment, eyes going wide, “...He was my brother,” he fumbled, “it’s different for us.”

Ranboo didn’t seem to agree, his mismatched eyes staring at the blond intently. Tommy grit his teeth, turning to stare back, directly into Ranboo’s eyes to spook him and make him stop. The taller shied away at the action, quickly moving his gaze to the ground, and Tommy smirked.

“Ranboo’s right,” Sam interjected, not impressed with Tommy’s evasion tactics, “He shouldn’t have taken it.”



“Well, maybe *you* shouldn’t insert yourself in other people’s business, dick.” The blond hissed, flipping him off.

“Tommy!” Phil cried out, eyes widening at the outburst.

“Okay...” Karl chuckled nervously, “Let’s all take a breather.” He wasn’t exactly fantastic at mediating, but thankfully the next memory started up before anything could get worse.

**Wilbur was seated silently on the floor of the ravine. His hair was disheveled and his jacket was crumpled in all the wrong places. He was slumped up against the wall, looking worse for wear. There was no one else around, and the hall was eerily quiet. His features appeared more sharp and more defined, accenting his cold eyes.**

**Above him came the sound of a door slamming and hurried footsteps. They descended down the stairway, echoing throughout the empty crevice. Wilbur lazily looked up, watching as Tubbo’s head poked over the edge, staring with wide eyes. His suit was messily buttoned, and his face was red like he’d just ran half a mile. He paused for just a second, panting and catching his breath.**

**“Tommy’s been spotted!” He gasped, a frantic look on his face. Wilbur’s eyes widened.**

**The scene cut to Tommy, the boy racing in a confusing zig-zag pattern, up and down hills and in between every tree he could find. His feet thumped loudly on the grass as his heart pounded in his chest. His gaze flitted over to a fallen tree on an angle, and quickly strayed from his route to scale it, using his newly gained height to leap over and heave himself onto a ledge. Once he’d successfully scrambled to his feet, he continued his sprint, checking over his shoulder every few seconds.**

**As he neared the other side of the ledge, a large pit in the ground made itself known and he hastily leapt into it, wincing and biting his tongue to conceal a cry of pain as he landed.**

“What the hell are you running from?” Quackity asked, staring intently at the screen. Tommy gave him an odd look.

“You.” He replied. The duck hybrid looked slightly taken aback at that.

“Oh...”

**He clamped a hand over his mouth, trying to keep his pants shallow and minuscule as he heard voices above him to his left. The pit he’d dived into was shrouded in bushes and roots, and he doubted they’d spotted him.**

**The voices grew slightly more muffled and distanced, but Tommy was still wary. He kept his hand where it was, trying to ignore the bugs crawling in the dirt around him.**

“Oh, that is just vile...” Jack mumbled, looking thoroughly disgusted, and Tommy almost wanted to laugh because in the moment it had been rather horrible, not necessarily the bugs, just the atmosphere itself, but he’d have spent ninety hours in that hole if it meant he could’ve avoided what was to come in the near future.

**The people above were drawing even further, but Tommy couldn’t bring himself to check, terrified that they’d be right there when he poked his head out. He remained in his spot in the ground, head nestling into the dirt and closing his eyes.**

**It was... comforting. Surprisingly warm too, it seemed. He felt oddly at peace at that moment, like that little nook in the ground had been made for him. It almost felt like home. He wasn’t quite sure what home was at that point, but somehow it felt like he’d been made for that specific moment. He felt as though the body he inhabited was built to be buried there, cuddled into the mud, caked in with the bugs.**

Phil squirmed at the sight, not liking how content Tommy seemed to be just *laying* half buried in some hole.

**When he opened his eyes it was dark, and his body felt stiff. He blinked blearily a couple of times, specs of dirt and gravel on his lashes. His body was cold, skin pale. He**

**felt like a corpse. Turning his head from side to side, he took note of where he was, not recognizing the cramped little hole.**

**All at once it came rushing back to him, and his eyes shot open fully. He hastily clambered out of the hole, not caring by that point if anyone was still out there. He pushed through the roots, taking in a deep breath as he looked around.**

**It was night, And he had no idea how long he'd slept for.**

**He looked around at his surroundings in a panic; everything looked so similar in the dark. He noticed a spider crawling up his leg, gently letting it down back onto the grass and muttering an apology.**

“How in god’s name do you just... do that?” Puffy asked, horrified.

“What?” Tommy looked over at her, genuinely perplexed.

“I- I mean there’s so many *bugs*, ” she shivered, feeling herself up and down at the idea of them, “and you just *slept* there!” She cried.

“I was tired,” the blond deadpanned, as though it was the most simple thing in the world, “and bugs are my friends.”

“Unbelievable...” Puffy muttered, looking away as if she was going to be sick.

**Rising back up, Tommy pondered for just a moment, staring north. Further down the slope he was stood upon he recognized a small pond that he’d seen before. It was hard to tell in the dark but the moonlight reflecting on the water did enough. Without much hesitation, he began to make his way in that direction, limping slightly as he seemed to have hurt his ankle when entering the little ditch.**

Niki frowned, watching the young boy trek forwards on screen. She'd always assumed they'd had somewhere before Pogtopia. She'd thought that the decrepit little cesspool of a base Wilbur was so fond of was somewhere they'd only moved *after* the former president had truly finally lost it, but it seemed she was wrong.

Where she'd imagined Wilbur and Tommy laughing, they were screaming at each other, and where she'd imagined them spending time together, they were at one another's throats. Where in her mind she'd seen Tommy sleeping in a warm bed, surrounded by love that would have then been reserved specifically for him, she watched as he slept in a hole in the ground with the spiders and maggots.

It was... sobering. *Terrifyingly* sobering.

Her jealousy had blinded her from the fact that maybe, just maybe, things hadn't been as perfect as she thought. She'd envied Tommy so fervently just to watch him struggle to stay afloat, and it made her feel sick.

It didn't change the fact that she still wished Wilbur had chosen her, however. Instead of truly feeling pity all she could think to herself was that if Wilbur had chosen her maybe, just maybe, things would have been different. Deep down, beneath her covetous desires and enraged envies, she knew it wasn't Tommy's fault, but that didn't stop her from purposely staying in the dark; in the shadows where Tommy's bright smile and stupidly sunny self couldn't get to her.

Could she not pretend for even a moment longer that Tommy was the problem? Niki was *scared*. She was terrified of coming to terms with the fact that she might've been brash and self-centered, that she might've put herself on a pedestal and left Tommy to pathetically crawl for salvation. The very idea that her actions might've not been completely justified left her feeling utterly paralyzed.

She'd spent so long doting on others, catering to everyone's needs but her own. She was Nihachu, the forgotten mother of a cherished country. Every second during her time, in the beginning, was put towards making sure everyone around her was content. She baked for them, made presents for them, comforted them, she'd been *everything* to them. And she knew her anger in itself was justified, but the mere idea of it being directed at the wrong person after living in a blind rage for so long, after dedicating herself to eradicating that person, she

didn't know if she could truly cope with that. Niki didn't know if she could face the truth in its whole.

Perhaps she'd continue to see it as Tommy's fault... for her own sake, just for a little longer.

**Tommy continued to stagger forwards, not completely lucid. He passed the pond, taking a second to stare at the water, watching as it rippled calmly. He saw the water bugs as they paraded around on top of the water's surface, and his expression didn't change as fish devoured them from underneath, coming up from murky depths to prey on the unsuspecting little creatures.**

**Wordlessly, he ambled forwards and eventually was met with the warm glow of torches. Where moonlight was pale and cold, the light of a torch, of fire, was warm and orange. Tommy's eyes reflected the flames as he neared the shack, still not speaking.**

**Before the door stood two figures. One was much taller than the other, shrouded in grey, while the other seemed to bounce on its heels, moving around in an annoying sort of way.**

**"Tommy!" One of them, the taller one, cried. And they were both racing out to greet him. Wilbur and Tubbo looked terrified, both sprinting.**

**Wil immediately engulfed Tommy in a large bear hug, holding the teen close. The tired daze the latter had been in finally seemed to break and he let himself smile wide.**

**"Are you okay?" Wilbur asked, pulling away from the hug so he could frantically go over his younger brother, checking for injuries. He plucked leaves and twigs out of the messy blond hair, befuddled. "What the hell happened?"**

**"I fell asleep in a pit." Tommy said, not skipping a beat. Wil stared at him as if he'd just grown a second head while Tubbo gave him a similar glance.**

**“You wh-” Wilbur had to steel himself, “ *Tommy* ,” he insisted, interrupting himself as he gripped Tommy’s arms tightly, “Tubbo said you’d been seen by the enemy.”**

**“That’s why I was in the hole?” The youngest tilted his head, “I was hiding obviously.”**

**“You are a class-A idiot...” Sapnap muttered, shaking his head.**

***“Hey!”***

**Wilbur was very quiet for a moment, seeming to be calculating something. When he raised his head he seemed set in his way.**

**“Tubbo I think you should leave now.” He stated quietly, voice even and face impassive. The boy in question looked taken aback.**

**“But Tommy-”**

**“-Is fine.” Wilbur finished, turning to look at the shorter boy. “I know you’re worried but if you’re gone any longer Schlatt might start to suspect something, hell, he might already be suspecting something. Now that we know Tommy’s okay, you can head back to L’Man- Manberg and come back here when it’s safe.”**

Tommy was beginning to grow nervous. He knew exactly where the memory was headed, and thought that it would have ended by then. His leg bounced up and down restlessly, and he couldn’t keep himself from panicking slightly.

If Drista didn’t cut it off soon...

He took a deep breath, trying to steady himself. If he called out then and Drista had been planning on stopping the others might get curious and insist she continue. He couldn’t tell whether or not it was worth the risk.

**Tubbo frowned, looking over at Tommy with sad eyes. The blond didn't really know how to react, so he just stared back. Tubbo looked him up and down, and then over at Wilbur's reassuring smile.**

**He sighed, drooping considerably. "Yeah... Yeah, you're right." He smiled sadly, "Life of a spy huh?"**

**Tommy grinned back, and Tubbo felt a weight lifted off his chest at that, moving to leave.**

**"Keep me updated, yeah?" He asked, "had me worried half to death tonight."**

**"Bye Tubbo." Tommy waved, watching the other as he went. He and Wilbur stood outside their door, waiting till they could no longer see Schlatt's right-hand man.**

**"Drista." Tommy began, trying to hide the urgency in his tone.**

**She didn't say a word, and the memory kept playing.**

**The second Tubbo had disappeared from the horizon, a dark look overtook Wilbur's features. The smile slipped from his face, and he looked much more like the typical 'Pogtopia Wilbur'. He grabbed Tommy's wrist tightly, nails digging into pale skin as he dragged the boy inside.**

**Tommy's eyes widened, trying and failing to out strength the older man as he was pulled further into their home. "W-Wil," He began, tripping over his words, "you're hurting me."**

**Wilbur didn't answer, lifting the trapdoor on the floor and beginning to descend the stairway, Tommy's wrist still clutched tightly.**

Tommy stared in horror at the screen, not knowing what to do. *He couldn't let them see.*

**They finally made it to the bottom and without hesitation, Wilbur used his grip on the younger to slam him up against the wall. Tommy sucked in a sharp gasp, rearing back as Wilbur's face came up close to his.**

***"You little shit!"* The man hissed, eyes completely void of anything sane. His teeth were bared in a snarl, looking more crazed than ever.**

No one in the room knew what to do, half too shocked to move and half too intrigued to stop staring.

*"Drista."* Tommy said, more urgent than time through gritted teeth.

**"Wil-"**

**"What the hell were you doing, huh?"**

**"...What?"**

**Wilbur pressed him further into the wall, and Tommy flinched back, clearly terrified.**

**"Don't play dumb Tommy," The taller laughed, "Tubbo tells me you've been spotted by the enemy and then you just, what? Disappear? For hours? *I want names.*"**

**Tommy looked beyond concerned at that point, trying and failing to get out of the death grip his brother had on him. "Wilbur stop it!" He squirmed, "I don't know what you're talking about!"**



***“Who are you conspiring with!?” Wilbur cried. Tommy furrowed his brow.***

**“Wil I’m not conspiring with anyone I don’t-” He was interrupted as his brother shoved him roughly, moving to pace back and forth within the tiny ravine they called ‘home’. He was smiling to himself, muttering so quietly that Tommy couldn’t hear a word.**

**“Drista!”**

**“Wilbur stop this,” Tommy took a hesitant step forward, “you’re not being yourself-”**

***“DRISTA!”***

**Tommy was cut off by a backhand to the face, stumbling backward right back into the wall. Wilbur stood with his hand outstretched, having stopped pacing, a dangerous look in his eye. The younger clutched his cheek in shock, staring up at his big brother, eyes stinging.**

**“You hit me...” Tommy whispered, betrayal and hurt interwoven in his words.**

Tommy went completely pale, eyes locked on the screen. He was frozen in place, unable to move even in the slightest. His heart was pounding and he felt as though he was on death’s door but *he could not move*. He’d spent so long trying to keep those things hidden, to not reveal them to enemies and ‘friends’ alike, only for what? His friend? Someone he trusted? To go and show everyone the memories as if it was some Saturday afternoon cinema viewing?

He felt sick, barely able to breathe or blink. Everything was *too much*.

He didn’t look over, couldn’t bring himself to look over at what the others must have been reacting with. He could only picture the disgust on their faces, or perhaps the glee at seeing

his weakness exposed.

Wilbur didn't seem to care, lost in his own head as he pondered. His eyes lit up just seconds later, and he zeroed in on his younger brother's hunched frame.

"You're with Schlatt, aren't you?" He grinned, practically shaking.

Tommy's hand slipped from his cheek, a large red handprint visible upon it. "What? Wil, I'm not-"

"There's a speech this morning in-" Wilbur looked down at his watch, "just a couple hours actually! You're working with him!" The man seemed dead set on his theory, "You took advantage of me! You knew I'd stay up all night worrying about you and be disoriented at Schlatt's speech today you- you *planned this*, didn't you?"

Tommy was staring at him in horror, unable to think straight. His brother, his big brother who had always protected him, had just *hit* him. And he didn't even care.

"Wilbur listen to yourself!" He tried, "I would never-"

"Come with me."

The younger blinked, eyes widening even further. "What? No, I-"

"*Come with me!*" Wilbur snarled, grabbing hold of Tommy's wrist once more. His grip was vice-like, completely inescapable, and consuming. Tommy gasped, letting out a panicked whine and clawing at the hand.

"Wilbur stop!" Tommy cried, pulling against his brother as hard as he could. "Wilbur!"

He dug his heels into the ground, nails bitten down to the bed scraping at the pale long fingers entrapping him. He whined again, tears building in his eyes.

Wilbur didn't speak, dragging Tommy down the hall, completely ignoring his younger brother's cries. They reached his quarters, and he brought the blond over to the corner. Tommy went white in the face.

**"No no no,"** He shook his head vehemently, pulling away desperately, **"Please Wilbur no!"**

**"Shut up!"** Wilbur hissed, throwing a closet door open. He carelessly shoved Tommy in, watching the young scramble to protect his face from the stone.

Tommy panted on his hands and knees, turning around desperately only to have the door slammed in his face. He let out a low keel, banging on the wood.

**" Wilbur!"** He screamed, tears beginning to flow freely as he let panic truly set in, **" Wilbur I'm sorry! Please! Don't do this!"**

No one in the room could move, horrified as they watched.

There was the clicking of a lock from inside the door and Tommy grew even more desperate. He slammed his fists against the door, begging to be freed. **" Please Wil I'll do anything! I'm sorry! "**

**"I'll let you out when I get back, Tommy."** Wilbur's muffled voice came from the other side before his footsteps slowly disappeared. Tommy sobbed, leaning against the door as he tried to keep himself calm. He went to reach for his pocket but felt his heart sink at the realization.

**Wilbur still had his communicator. He couldn't call for help.**

**“No no no no...” His eyes became more crazed, more frantic as he clawed at the door, bartering with no one, pleas falling on deaf ears.**

Tubbo watched, shocked beyond his years as he saw his best friend, his other half, wail and cry, locked in the small closet. He covered his mouth with his hand, barely concealing a sob.

It couldn't be real. The memories had to be fake, they had to be fabricated.

There was no way Tommy wouldn't've told him Wilbur was doing that. There was no way he wouldn't've *noticed*.

**“Please!” Tommy sobbed, falling against the door, curled into himself as tightly as possible. “Please, Wilbur!”**

Ranboo felt his cheeks begin to burn, tears silently slipping down his face. He wanted to look away, to pretend it wasn't real, but it was, and it was there. He cringed at every scream, felt his heart shatter at every sob, unable to do anything but watch. He wanted to stop it but it'd already happened.

He'd never known Wilbur. He knew Ghostbur, but the ghost of a man was friendly and charming, gentle with his words and soft with his actions. He was *nothing* like the man on screen. He wanted to compare Wilbur to a monster, but that would be insulting to all the beasts and creatures of the world.

Ranboo hadn't had a clue anything even similar to what he was watching had transpired, and he suddenly felt extremely sick, unable to think of anything other than the fact that Tommy clearly hadn't told them; which mean if anything similar had happened he wouldn't've said either. Just how much was Tommy hiding from them?

**Tommy's breaths became even more shallow as he began to hyperventilate, gasping desperately for air and yet taking in none. He pawed at the door, tears streaming down his face as he wheezed and pleaded, but to no avail.**

**Without much warning, his eyes rolled back and his head thudded against the door, body going slack.**

**The screen went dark.**

No one spoke.

No one *could* speak.

The tension in the air was so thick you could've cut it with a knife, and everyone alike was in varying degrees of grief.

Puffy sobbed silently into her hands, trying to keep herself together and failing miserably. Her boy, her sweet boy had been abused at the hands of his own older brother, a man he'd *trusted*. Puffy had done so much to prepare for Tommy's healing process. She'd read up on child trauma, and tried to pick up on his triggers because god knows he wouldn't ever say them aloud; she'd even been in contact with therapists in other servers, trying to ready herself for helping Tommy through what exile and prison had been. But there was more. There was so. much. more.

She'd asked if Wilbur had ever hit him and Tommy had lied to her face and she didn't know *why*. How could she help him if she didn't even know everything he needed help with? How could she be the best parental figure for him if she didn't know what to do?

Their silence was broken by Phil, standing abruptly. He looked deathly pale, tears tracking down his cheeks.

"I- I need to leave." He choked out, looking on the brink of passing out. "I need to..."

Sam looked up, eyes red and puffy, frowning at the bird hybrid. “Phil...”

*“I need to go!”* Phil shrieked, shaking like a leaf, “He... He... Oh my god, he- *Tommy ...*” His incoherent speech dissolved into sobs as he sunk to the floor, holding himself tightly. No one moved to help him, though Puffy stared sadly.

Ranboo blinked at that, as if something Phil had said had set off bells in his head. He pondered for a moment before nearly snapping his neck at the speed he looked over.

Tommy.

Tommy had been in the room. Tommy had watched that all over again. Tommy hadn’t made a sound. Tommy wasn’t making a sound.

“Tommy?” Ranboo whispered, eyes wide as he turned to the blond. His hands hovered above the boy’s shoulders, unsure of what to do.

Tommy didn’t speak, he didn’t even acknowledge that Ranboo was there. He just... stared. At the carpet. His eyes were completely blank. There was no rage, no sadness, no *spark*. He wouldn’t move, completely unresponsive.

“Tommy?” It was Karl that time, voice hoarse as he cried but still looking over in concern. Everyone in the room was looking at the boy by that point.

“What’s going on?” Phil stood, hawk-like eyes narrowing in on his son, “What’s happening to him?”

“I- I don’t know!” Ranboo’s voice shook, nervously surveying Tommy’s body. “It’s like he’s asleep or something but his eyes are open and he’s not- *he’s not answering!*”

Phil moved forwards, kneeling at his boy's side. He looked up at the blond, taking him in. He sobbed, hand covering his mouth as he watched Tommy stare into nothingness. "Tommy..." He whispered, shaking, "*Oh Tommy...*"

What had he *done*? What had *Wilbur* done?

In all his years, in his centuries, his *millennia* of living, Phil had never been so enraged. He'd seen mountains rise and fall, countries and civilizations do the same, but it was all nothing compared to that moment. He'd trusted Wilbur, he'd *loved* Wilbur, and the man had been a monster.

Insane or not, there was no excuse for what he'd done to his younger brother, and Phil had the sinking feeling that what they'd seen hadn't been the last time it'd happened.

"Tommy?" Tubbo whispered, crying still as he leaned forwards.

Phil moved to put a hand on his son's knee, but it was instantly slapped away by Ranboo, both him and Tubbo staring at him murderously.

"*Don't touch him.*" Ranboo hissed, face the most serious Phil had ever seen, "He doesn't like being touched."

The elder man stared, unsure of what to do. "B-But we need to snap him out of this, I mean- look at him!"

"Don't. Touch. Him." Tubbo reiterated, looking ready to fight Phil with his bare fists if that was what it came to.

"Wh-"

They were interrupted by a bright light encasing the room, completely blinding them all. Phil moved to shield his eyes with his arm, shying away. The light slowly dissipated, and it took everyone in the room a good minute to see again. And yet when they looked at Tommy's seat,

He was gone.

Phil's wings flared in panic and shock, unable to comprehend the sight before him. Ranboo let out a startled vwoop, eyes scanning the empty seat. George and Sapnap stood at once, looking around the room as they grew more and more alarmed.

"Tommy's unresponsive." Drista's voice boomed overhead, scaring them all, "I'll take care of this."

"What the fuck are you talking about!?" Quackity snarled, rising from his seat and staring up, "This is your fucking fault in the first place! Give him back right fucking now!" His fists were clenched, shaking with uncontrollable rage, his eyes still glistening in the small amount of light they had.

There was no answer from above, and they all grew more agitated.

*"I know you can hear me!"*

There was still no answer, and Quackity collapsed into his seat, burying his head in his hands. *"Fuck!"*

Karl moved to sit beside him in a daze, barely aware of what he was doing. He placed a tentative hand on Quackity's back, rubbing circles as he stared into space.

"I suggest you get back to your places," Drista spoke again, "the memories will start up again soon."



“Are you insane!?” Puffy cried, “After what just happened to Tommy!?”

“I already told you, I’m dealing with it,” Drista gritted out, “I didn’t know he’d... react like that. None of you are leaving this room until you finish every single memory so I’d highly suggest just going along with what I say.”

Puffy laughed at that, crying as she did. Phil silently made his way back to his seat, wings dragging at his feet. He slumped down, putting his head in his hands as his tears dripped onto the carpet.

Everyone in the room was silent, save for the handful of people still in tears. They’d been unhappy with their situation beforehand but by then... it just seemed cruel.

Just how much more were they going to be forced to watch?

## Chapter End Notes

SOOOO? did u like it? did u enjoy? i certainly had some fun writing! there are going to be some HUGE internal monologues coming soon in the next chapter so don't worry about reactions to what they just saw TRUST me, there's a lot more where that came from. anyways thank you all so so much for reading and for the insane support!! love u all :D

~Bats47

# Brother.

## Chapter Summary

why didn't you save me?

## Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNINGS!: claustrophobia, emotional manipulation, discussions of physical abuse

HIHIHI!!! thank you guys SO so much for the support ur all so incredible i cannot believe it T-T u guys r the best for real  
~47bats

Technoblade was at a loss for words. After watching what he'd just watched he truly had no idea how to react. Seeing his twin brother treat Tommy, someone the two of them had *always* looked out for, so harshly and...horribly, made his stomach turn.

Despite the rumours or widely believed stigma, Technoblade was *not* heartless. He was withdrawn and anxious, bad at conversation, and scarily quiet for the most part, but that didn't mean he didn't care about others. That being said, the list of people he actually did care for was extremely short, and by that, he meant it was really just his immediate family members. Sure, he'd tried giving a damn about close friends, but it always ended in betrayal or something bitter along those lines. In his mind, he didn't *need* anyone more than his family.

He lived on a huge server, yes, and had been known for being somewhat amicable with others from time to time, but the truth was that he trusted them much shorter than he could throw them. People seemed to have this odd misconception about him; that *The Blood God* existed merely for the thrill of battle, the bloodshed, and the screams of his enemies. It wasn't true. The voices, they existed for those things, but he was not them. He would never be them. Beneath his sadistic urges and uncontrollable tendencies, he was a living, breathing, *feeling* person, contrary to popular belief.

Being part piglin only did more to drill the idea that he was some emotionless beast into the minds of others, so he remained in recluse, only bothering himself with three people.

Tommy was one of those three.

Techno had spent many a decade ambling around countless arenas and servers with his father at his side, searching for any sort of release from the whisperings and hissings of death and blood within his head, so needless to say he hadn't spent much time at home. He didn't know Tommy as well as he could've, but that was okay because he didn't claim to.

He knew his position. He knew Wilbur knew Tommy inside and out. He *knew* that.

So when he'd been invited onto Dream's server by none other than Tommyinnit he'd been, admittedly, confused. Sure, he wasn't blind. He knew that to Tommy, he was *The Blade*; his big strong older brother who was always off on cool adventures with *The Philza Minecraft*. He knew Tommy idolized him; that as much as the kid bragged about having the coolest big brother, he didn't actually *see* Technoblade as a brother, nor did he see Philza as a father.

To Tommy, the two were like celebrities. They'd come home from time to time, regale the two 'shut-ins' on their battles and triumphs, give the blond a pat on the head for good measure, and then be gone in the morning, not a trace of them in sight. Tommy had always seen them as more of idols than family; out of his reach, and Technoblade knew that.

That's why he hadn't been sure about joining Dream's SMP, and when he finally did, he kept his distance.

He was... worried. Worried that if Tommy got too close he'd see that Technoblade wasn't actually *The Blade*, but just some piglin brute who couldn't control his bloodlust. He didn't want Tommy to see that he couldn't control the violence and that he was something to be feared, not revered.

But it seemed in his attempt to keep up the charade of a hero, he'd been completely blind to the fact that a hero was exactly what Tommy had needed. He didn't need *The Blade*, he'd needed Techno. Tommy had needed someone who could have stopped Wilbur, and

Technoblade knew that even if words had failed him he could've been a barrier between the two. He could have protected Tommy if he knew, but he didn't. And the blond had suffered for it.

He'd been worried of imposing, as well. He knew Tommy and Wilbur were close and, well, he didn't know the kid all that well. Of course, when it came to Wilbur, he could never forget how to talk to his twin. Even if it had been a thousand years it would've been as if nothing had changed, but that wasn't the case for him and Tommy. That said, where he'd assumed Tommy would've been thankful for the space, he was actually dead wrong. The *last* thing that boy had needed was to be alone with Wilbur.

Techno felt... guilty. Believe him, that was new. *Incredibly* new. He'd always been in positions where he could confidently say there was nothing he could've done, but by then, by then he *knew*, he had options. He knew he could have been there. He knew he should have seen something; whether it be bruises on Tommy's forearms or a series of flinches when Wilbur moved too fast, *he should have seen*.

It wasn't his fault, he knew that. He didn't exactly blame himself, no, but he did feel partially responsible for enabling the person that Wilbur had become. His own selfish desires, of goading Wilbur on and praising the new unhinged behavior had only made it harder for Tommy to keep his head afloat.

The memory he'd just witnessed, of Wilbur *hitting* Tommy, of Wilbur locking Tommy in a closet, of Tommy passing out from hyperventilating, it was fucking jarring. He'd seen gruesome death after gruesome death in his life but somehow what he'd seen just then took the cake. It made him feel absolutely sick inside, and he didn't know what to do about it because it'd already happened.

He wasn't dumb, and he could tell things would only get worse from thereon. He'd been the only one to really see Tommy after exile. He *knew* things would get worse, and suddenly he wasn't sure if he could deal with watching it.

Still, at the end of the day, the kid was rude and loud. He didn't deserve what Wilbur had done to him, god no, but Techno wasn't going to treat him like he was some saint. Tommy was obsessed with those *stupid* discs, and he'd put people before them if it came to it. Tommy was arrogant and never learned from his mistakes. Tommy had *betrayed* Techno; he was selfish. So, yes, he did feel ashamed, and he did care for his younger brother, but that

wouldn't change the fact that Tommy was annoying and never faced real consequences for his actions. If he did he complained that it was unfair. He wasn't worth the effort, in Techno's mind. Sure, family was family, and he'd die for the kid, but that didn't mean he had to tolerate him in the slightest or not think of him as some little brat.

"...Is he going to be okay?" Sapnap whispered quietly, looking shaken up still.

"He'll be fine." Tubbo declared without skipping a beat, "He's always fine."

"Tubbo..." Ranboo began, eyes sad and tired. He and Tubbo alike knew that Tommy was *far* from fine, and had been for quite some time. But as his husband turned to him he knew, Tubbo needed this. He needed to believe Tommy could bounce back no matter what, even after going completely catatonic he *had* to be fine. They needed him to be.

Ranboo quieted, letting Tubbo have his way.

**The sun was high in the sky, shining down on fields of wheat and grass. The clouds were sparse, and the wind blew gently, just enough to ruffle a bird's feathers. There was a small little fenced cottage sitting happily in the middle of a large field, pens full of animals beside it. Far to the left, a dark forest grew, imposing on their bright little area.**

**This was not Dream's server.**

Both Techno and Phil's eyes lit up at the sight, hearts tugging. Their very first home, the place where all three of the children had grown up.

It looked so... happy.

**Two young children giggled and screamed as they ran around the front yard, slashing and hacking back and forth at each other with wooden swords. One of them had long brown hair in a braid, while the other had short fluffy brown hair and a pair of circular**

**glasses. They parried and poked, having at each other with rather improper forms, but it didn't seem to matter to them.**

“You're naturally brunet?” Fundy asked, leaning over. Apparently, it was no difficult feat figuring out who the two kids were. Curse Wilbur and his ability to never outgrow that... that look! Both Techno and Tommy were adamant that the middle child (by two minutes! *only two minutes!*) had been born with this... cursed face. He was forever recognizable. From four to forty, you knew exactly who you were looking at without skipping a beat. His stupid hair didn't help much either.

“What, did you think Wilbur had naturally pink hair?” The piglin hybrid replied.

“Guess I just never thought about it... *Wait!* Does that mean Wilbur's part piglin too!?”

Phil gave the fox hybrid an odd look. “...Yes? They're twins, mate.”

Everyone was staring at that point, looking perplexed, as though the fact that the two boys who had once been one cell might've had the same genes had never crossed their minds.

“Then why does he look so... Wilbur?” Quackity asked, gesturing to the screen.

Phil laughed loudly, grinning. “He had pointed ears, just like Techno. His fuckin hair covered em though. He also had tusks, but just like how Tech can retract his so could he. That's all really, other than, well... amplified strength...”

The bird hybrid's smile slipped at that. He'd been trying to ignore the elephant in the room, they all had, trusting Drista would do whatever she would as the situation was out of their hands, but the thought of Wilbur being stronger than average all brought them back to the same conclusion.

Tommy hadn't stood a chance, ever.

No one spoke after that, going back to the screen.

**“You really suck at this.” Techno grinned, long braid swinging back and forth as he avoided the other’s wooden sword.**

**“I do not!” Wilbur insisted, voice rising an octave as he grew upset. He was pouting, swordsmanship becoming sloppier the more in his feelings he got. Techno avoided another jab, laughing as Wilbur just barely deflected his attack.**

**“I want to play too!” A third voice came, much more high-pitched and worse with pronunciations. Wilbur and Techno both froze, sighing simultaneously and turning on their heels at the same time. Twin synchronization was weird.**

**Tommy, who couldn’t have been more than six, stood tall and proud in the grass, hands on his hips and his chest puffed out. Despite his age, he had the same angry expression he always did, eyebrows furrowed and lips pulled into a large frown.**

**“Look Tommy,” Techno began, “if we wanted to play with babies we’d tell you. But we don’t.”**

**“So go away!” Wilbur butted in, looking annoyed.**

**Tommy took a deep breath, face growing red as his eyes filled with tears, before turning and making his way back to the cottage wordlessly.**

**“Oh no,” The elder murmured, looking tired. Wilbur gave his brother a long-suffering glance.**

**“Boys!” Came a loud cry from inside. Both twins cringed, looking over at the open window. Phil stood inside, washing the dishes and watching them as they played.**

**Tommy sat on the counter, regarding them with a smug smile. “Either you let your brother play or I’m quite sure I could find some spring cleaning for the three of you to do!”**

**“But da-”**

**“ *Wil.* ” Phil said sternly, leaving no room open for arguments.**

Techno pursed his lips, remembering that day well. He and Wil had felt awful after what they’d done.

**“*Fine!*” Wilbur cried, throwing his hands in the air, looking rather pissed off. Techno let out a loud groan, throwing his head back.**

**Tommy came skipping out of the house and up towards them, smiling wide like the little shit he was. He stopped before the two, looking up at them with his wide unnerving eyes that had always crept them out.**

**“You’re both fucking idiots.” He grinned.**

Phil gaped at the screen as his five-year-old swore, turning to look at Techno who was pointedly looking *away* from his father.

Everyone else in the room erupted into laughter at the scene.

“Where did he learn that!?” Phil cried.

**Both twins’ jaws dropped.**



**“We told you not to repeat those words!” Wilbur hissed, looking panicked.**

**“If you can say them I can say them too!” Tommy insisted, pausing for a moment, “Dickhead!”**

**“Whatever...” The middle child grumbled, rolling his sleeves up. “Doesn’t matter anyways because you are *not* playing- I mean sword fighting with us.”**

**Tommy blinked at him, tilting his head. Both he and Techno recoiled at the glance. The pre-teen equivalent of a toddler grinned darkly at them. He cupped his little hands around his mouth, sucking in a large breath.**

**“ *DA-* ”**

**“ *Okay! Okay!*” Wilbur interrupted, eyes wide. “Just... don’t do that...”**

**“Why is baby Tommy so *scary*? ” Karl shivered.**

**“He’s evil...” George muttered.**

**“Yay!” The blond giggled, smiling. Techno let out an exhausted sigh. “I want to use Techno’s sword!” Tommy insisted, making grabbing motions towards the ‘weapon’ in the eldest hands.**

**Wilbur’s eyes seemed to shine at that, and he grinned to himself. Techno took a step forward, ready to tell the youngest that he would *not* be using his sword, but Wilbur spoke up first.**

**“You know Tommy,” Wil began, “there’s another sword in the shed. We could do a three-on-three if you went to get it.”**

Techno looked over at his twin, perplexed, but one glance from Wilbur mischievously screamed *trust me*, and so he relented.

Tommy grew a bit weary at the mention of the shed, shying away. Wil took that as his moment to really drive his idea home.

“Is anything wrong, Tommy?” He cooed, “Are you scared?”

Instantly, a look of pure rage passed over the youngest’s face, and he began to scream and hiss at them, declaring loudly that he was ‘a big man’ and ‘didn’t get scared’.

“Y’know Tommy, there’s nothing wrong with being scared.” Techno cut in, smiling in a fake sympathetic way. He wasn’t sure where Wilbur was headed with his ploy, but twins always plotted together.

“I’m not *fuckin* scared!” Tommy screamed, nearly jumping as he did and turning around, marching on down behind the cottage towards the shed.

“I remember this...” Phil muttered, looking worn down. “There was less swearing from my youngest in my memory though...”

The two watched their younger brother disappear around the corner of their house silently. Wilbur turned to his brother, an evil glint in his eye. He gestured for Techno to come with as he followed after Tommy.

The boy in question skipped happily, parading through the grass. He stopped to pretend to tie his shoe, despite them being velcro. He’d noticed both Techno and Wilbur would often kneel down to tie their laces, and he didn’t quite understand why. So occasionally he’d bend over, looking down at his little strap-on shoes, and pretend to tie them, just sort of playing with his hands until he was content.

**He got back up, making his way over to the rickety old shed he had always tried to avoid. He didn't notice the two figures watching him from afar.**

**Tommy took a steadying breath, staring up at the shack as it seemed to double in size. "I'm a big man." He whispered quietly to himself. "Big man."**

**With one mighty pull, he managed to swing open the large door, straining to do so. Instantly, the atmosphere changed to something dark and cold. Tommy swallowed thickly. He looked around the doorway, hoping he could find the extra wooden sword there and merely grab it without stepping in, but to no avail.**

"There's no extra sword, is there?" Quackity asked. Techno shook his head and Puffy let out a low whine, frowning at the screen.

"He's just a *baby*! Why would you trick him like that!?"

"First, he's five." Techno held up a finger, "and second, we were thirteen. We didn't want to play with him."

**He swallowed thickly, calming himself before taking a step into the shed, and then another. Tommy looked around at the high-up shelves, scanning them. He frowned, taking a more cautious step inside.**

**Behind him, the door slammed shut, and he let out a loud gasp, turning around as fast as he could.**

Techno sighed, putting his head in his hands. The amount of days they'd spent doting on Tommy to make up for that...

"You didn't know he was claustrophobic..." Phil smiled weakly, trying to comfort him, "None of us did."

**Tommy let out a low whine, running towards the door and pressing up against it. He heard a lock clicking and two little snickers from outside.**

**Tears pricked at his vision and he frowned, trying to jump up and grab the doorknob. His breathing picked up rather fast, and the next time he blinked there were tears streaming down his cheeks.**

**He sobbed, pushing weakly against the door. He pushed again, but nothing came, and he grew more panicked, losing himself in his own mind. He let out a loud cry, beginning to breathe even faster, unable to measure how much time was going by but knowing he needed *out*.**

**The screen glitched, changing from Tommy in the Shed to the older version of Tommy in the Closet.**

**It flickered between the two, back and forth until the shed door was swung open. The silhouette of his father stood before him, sunlight streaming into the shack. Tommy smiled up, tears almost immediately stopping at the sight.**

**But the scene changed again, to a silhouette of Wilbur standing in the closet doorway, looking down on his younger brother with glowing red eyes.**

**It switched back and forth between savior and tormentor, static on the screen growing thicker as a ringing went out through the room.**

**Suddenly, the screen went black, and there was nothing but Tommy's quiet, teen voice.**

***“Why didn't you save me this time?”***

Phil took in a sharp breath, eyes pricking at the scene. “*Oh Tommy...*” He whispered, fists clenching at the fabric of his cloak around him. Tommy had *needed* him.

Ranboo, despite his generally empathetic and caring nature, couldn’t find it in himself to feel any sympathy for Phil. Tommy had needed the older man and he hadn’t been there. Tommy had needed a father. Tommy had needed someone other than Wilbur to raise him because clearly, the lack of a father had impacted Wilbur himself in an awful, twisted way.

The enderman hybrid was nearly boiling over with rage. He’d joined the server after Wilbur’s demise, but from what he’d heard, the man was ‘loving’ and ‘gentle’. All Ranboo had seen was a manipulative abusive asshole. Mentally unsound or not he was *hurting* Tommy, badly, and Ranboo didn’t allow *anyone* to hurt Tommy.

What angered him most, however, was the sick realization he’d had.

The reactions across the room, the loud sobs and terrified gasps, they were directed more at Wilbur’s actions than they were at Tommy’s suffering. These people in the room... they were mourning the loss of the Wilbur in their heads more than they were mourning Tommy, the living boy who’d been just beside them. They were more ruined by the fact that Wilbur had done those things than the fact that they’d been done *to* Tommy.

To almost everyone in the room, Tommy was still, Tommy. It didn’t make sense to say aloud but in his brain it did. Tommy wasn’t Tommy to Ranboo he was *Tommy*. He was a loud and rude kid, yes, but he was also Tubbo’s best friend who he’d watched fight tooth and nail to keep Tubbo alive. He was immature and brash, but he was also the very first friend Ranboo had made on the server. He was ‘selfish’ ( *sure he was* ), but he’d also taken the whole fall for George’s house, not ratting Ranboo out even in the face of a second exile. To Ranboo, Tommy was family.

To everyone else? Well, they didn’t know him at all. To them, he was just a selfish rude kid.

Eyes flitting over to the empty space beside him, Ranboo frowned, thinking of the blond. His heart ached for Tommy, and the minute he got him back he wouldn’t be letting *anyone* lay a hand on him.

Tommy awoke with a gasp, eyes shooting open as he rocketed into a sitting position. His hair was a mess, even rattier than before, and his eyes were puffy and bloodshot. He took a few deep breaths, trying to calm himself and recall why he awoke in such a panic. He looked around at his surroundings, recognizing the jagged stone and the bed as his room. He couldn't place exactly what happened, grabbing a fistful of blanket and frowning.

"Tommy!" A voice called, as though they were relieved, "Oh thank god!"

Wilbur stepped into the room, stomping his cigarette into the ground as he rushed over to the bed in the corner. He looked wrecked, more so than usual. His hair was even more matted than Tommy's, and his eyebags were practically dark black at that point. He surged forward, reaching a hand out for the blond.

At the sight of his older brother, all of the memories of prior events came rushing back, and Tommy let out a startled yelp, backing away from the man nearing him. He pressed his back against the corner, eyes wide and terrified as he breathed heavily.

Wilbur stopped dead in his tracks, hands falling to his side. He looked so *sad*. "Oh, Tommy..." He whispered, voice hoarse as tears pricked at his eyes, "I'm so sorry..."

Tommy frowned, looking confused, but lowering his guard slightly. The fear of Wilbur being angry at him was thankfully just his imagination.

Tubbo felt his chest tighten at Wilbur's actions, and his eyes widened. If the man was about to do what he thought he was....

Wilbur pulled a chair up close to Tommy's bedside, slouching down in it. The latter had yet to move from his position against the wall, still watching his older brother like a frightened animal.

"I'm *so* sorry, Tommy." Wilbur pressed, eyes looking desperate. Tommy swallowed thickly, some of the tension releasing in his body.

**“What the fuck is wrong with you?” He managed, muttering it quietly. If Wilbur wasn’t mad, well, *someone* had to be mad, right?**

**“Tommy...” Wilbur began, frowning.**

**“You *hit* me!” Tommy pressed, pausing to laugh incredulously, “A-And you... *you* locked me in there...” He whispered, no absence of horror or betrayal in his tone.**

**“I didn’t- I wasn’t thinking clearly Tommy I-”**

**“ *You hurt m-*”**

**“ *I did what I had to!*” Wilbur snapped, interrupting the younger. Tommy flinched instantly, closing his mouth and pressing up against the wall.**

**“I- *Fuck!* ” The elder’s shoulders dropped as he placed his head in his hands, shaking slightly. Tommy was watching with worried eyes.**

**“I am so *so* sorry, Tommy.” Wilbur repeated for what felt like the thousandth time. Tommy stared, eyes sad and welling with tears.**

**They sat in silence.**

**“...Why?” The younger asked finally, bottom lip wobbling.**

**Wilbur sighed, running a hand through his hair. He rubbed at his face, looking Tommy in the eyes.**

**“I was so worried you were going to leave me,” He whispered, “so worried you’d take off with Schlatt and I- I’d be *alone*... I shouldn’t have hit you, I know, I was just... I was *scared*,” his eyes welled with tears, “*I fucked up, Tommy*...”**

Tubbo seethed at the screen. It was taking everything within him not to scream at the top of his lungs. How *dare* Wilbur try and victimize himself in a situation like that?

The worst part was that he *knew* Tommy. Tubbo knew his best friend had a scarily big heart and that the chances of him blaming himself were... they were high.

**Tommy didn’t know what to say, so he merely stared.**

**“I’m such an idiot,” Wil sobbed into his hands, “I’m so fucking stupid!” He raised his head, gripping at his hair and pulling it tightly. Tommy’s eyes went wide, and without even thinking he scrambled across the bed, pawing at his older brother’s hands.**

**“Wil stop it!” He hissed, “You’re hurting yourself!”**

**Wilbur snapped his head up then, staring at Tommy with wide eyes. And for the first time in forever, Tommy saw *Wilbur* in his eyes. He could see his brother.**

**“It’s okay,” he whispered, tears of his own gathering in his eyes, “I-It’s okay.”**

**It really wasn’t. But Tommy didn’t know any better. All he could see was that Wilbur was hurting himself and it was his fault. Hell, maybe Wilbur *had* done what he needed to do. He obviously cared a lot about Tommy if he was crying that much. The man felt so *guilty*, and he was usually so gentle with the boy.**

**Wordlessly, Tommy scooted over in the bed, and Wilbur hesitantly climbed in. He laid down on his side, pulling his younger brother down and clutching him close to his chest as his fingers carded through the blond hair. They laid in silence.**



**“You’d never leave me, right Tommy?”**

**Tommy closed his eyes, letting himself lay in Wilbur’s arms. The bruising under his eye was highlighted in the low flame of the torches.**

**“Never.” He affirmed quietly.**

Tubbo broke into sobs.

# Don't Go

## Chapter Summary

drista and tommy trying their best despite being sooo different + tommy wilbur scene

TRIGGER WARNINGS!: physical abuse, manipulation

Drista sighed, running a hand through her hair as she stood, glancing back at where Tommy was curled on the floor. The place she'd brought him to was just... space. A sort of empty place where gods often resided. There wasn't truly a way to describe it, it was and wasn't everything, but in one word *other* than space, she'd have to say it was... dark.

She hadn't anticipated... whatever the hell it was that was going on. Her friend was completely unresponsive, and any attempt she made to bring him back down to earth proved useless.

She didn't understand; she was doing it *for* Tommy. She wanted him to finally be okay, but for some reason, he had quite literally just stopped, entirely. Drista saw the way people shared what they'd been through, she watched down on them as they moaned and groaned and eventually came to an understanding, but not Tommy. He didn't share, and if he did, it was a watered-down vague semblance of the truth at best. She saw how much easier it would be for her friend if he would just open up even slightly, but he wouldn't, so she took it into her own hands.

And yes, perhaps she was slightly biased. Perhaps there were other members of the server who omitted certain facts and details about their own stories and personal hells, but to be quite frank, Drista didn't care for them. Hell, she was still new to caring about Tommy. She'd never set her mind to caring about a mortal, about someone so... *fragile*. Well, she supposed there was her sort of brother... her lowly groveling excuse for a brother, but she'd never felt much for him. She had only her eldest brother, another deity, that she loved.

Until Tommy, that was.

Tommy was... different. He was loud and rude, prone to injuries, impulsive, and brash. By all means, he was exactly what she despised about mortals because he was the exact definition of one. He lived with such fiery passion, never once giving into the idea that in the grand scheme of things it might all be pointless. He didn't ever stop to think about the grand scheme, actually, he just focused on the then and there. He lived in the moment, and that had always meant so little to Drista because a moment for her was eons to him. His moment that he fought tooth and nail for, his moment that he quite literally died for, over and over again, was pathetic in her eyes.

She supposed it was his raw simplicity that drew her in. Where others were profound and esoteric, where they seemed to grow larger than life and push boundaries they shouldn't, Tommy was simply himself. He was so disgustingly *human*.

Mortality, in a way, was precious. It was fleeting, and unless you knew otherwise it was all there was. Humans and other creatures alike lived and died before Drista herself could even blink, but somewhere along the line she'd come to envy that, and she was almost dead certain it was Tommy's fault.

He lived without fear of deadlines, without fear of gods and monsters, without existentialism that she'd seen so many other humans latch onto. Perhaps it was because he didn't have time for gods and monsters, or perhaps it was because if he stopped for even a moment to truly think he'd be slain where he stood.

Tommyinnit was *always* running, *always* going, *always* in motion; and Drista couldn't help the admiration that came as she watched. It was so... simple. Being a divine being herself she didn't *get* simplicity, but Tommy himself *was* just that.

That was why he was so precious to her. He was the closest she would ever get to understanding the raw purity of living numbered days.

And her brother had taken that from him. Dream had taken what made Tommy himself. Mortals weren't supposed to come back. That wasn't something that occurred. Death needed to have *meaning*. Death needed to have weight or existence itself would become fruitless.

The fact that Dream had taken mortality in its purest and molded it into his undead project, well, it enraged her.

By that point, she'd had enough. As a god, she wasn't supposed to interfere in the way she was. It was probably a given that she *shouldn't* have rounded up all those people and sat them through what they were seeing, but as far as letting nature take its course had gone, her annoyance of a brother had sent that down the drain when he brought back Tommy from the dead.

If the story of Tommyinnit had been forcibly reopened, Drista was certain she wouldn't let the following chapters be the same as the ones that came before them. She wouldn't let the spiral of grief and horror continue on.

The lectures she'd get from Foolish and X seemed insignificant if it meant she could help her one and only friend.

"Tommy," She began, crouching down beside him, "I don't get it... What are you doing? I've checked over all your vitals, all your systems and you're *fine*, but you won't speak or move I don't..."

She trailed off, looking him over again. His knees were tucked tightly into his chest as he sat, staring vacantly into space. He just, wouldn't move. No matter what she did.

"I hate you."

Drista blinked, surprised from behind her mask, looking over at where the soft-spoken and dead words had come from. "What?" She tilted her head.

"I hate you." Tommy repeated, still staring into nothingness, eyes hollow and empty.

She felt something brand new at that; a sort of sinking feeling in her gut. Leaning forward, a strand of hair fell over her mask. "You don't mean that.."

Tommy's eyes suddenly focused, and his gaze locked on her, bubbling with fury. He stood shakily, but with intention, pushing himself up hastily, and she backed away. He was sneering at her, and though she floated above the ground making her appear taller than him he was still somewhat intimidating. Well, perhaps that wasn't the right word... or perhaps it was.

Drista wasn't *afraid* of Tommy hurting her in that moment, not with his fists at least. The one sentence uttered before seemed to have jarred her, and she didn't quite know how to react.

"I thought you were my friend!" He cried, pleading yet angered. "I thought you... I... *Why* would you do this Drista?"

She frowned, not sure what to say. Why didn't he see? "Tommy I-"

"I hate you!" He said once more, chest heaving with uneven breaths as tears of rage pricked at his eyes. "How could you show them those things!?"

"Look at yourself, Tommy." She muttered, finding it hard to swallow for some reason.

"You-"

*"Look at yourself."*

Tommy faltered, looking down at his hands. They were pale and bruised, fingers crooked and bandaged. Cuts from clawing at obsidian had yet to heal, and he could see the bits of scar tissue from every single ember that had graced them with its tantalizing promise of warmth before forever marring him with the mark of someone destined to be cold and alone.

It was disgusting.

He scoffed, shoving them into his sweater pockets unceremoniously. He had the sickening feeling that if he were to look at them for any longer he'd be on his knees begging Drista to

hack them off.

“What about it,” Tommy muttered, glaring at her, “Quit being so fucking vague you massive asshole.”

“I’m not being vague, Tommy.” Drista insisted, “You’re hurt, and you need help.”

*I’m damaged, and I deserve to be alone.*

“Oh fuck off,” he rolled his eyes, “since when do you care? Didn’t see you giving a shit when I was hm... You know? With your best pal? Your *brother*? ” his fists clenching as he said the words, as though they were physically damaging him, he still wouldn’t back down.

“Tommy I- I wasn’t *allowed* to get involved before; gods aren’t supposed to meddle-”

“Well, you seem to have no problem now, huh? What? Were you just bored?” He taunted, not seeing how tense she was growing, “Why now? Why now, Drist-”

*“Because he interfered first!”* She hissed, voice raising. Tommy instantly went still, hurt flashing over his eyes for a mere moment before they glazed over. Silence washed over them, suddenly making somewhere that could only be defined by words like space and empty feel so, so cramped and small.

“Oh I get it,” Tommy huffed out a laugh, rocking back on his heels, “This isn’t actually about me. It’s about getting back at him, hm? I’m just- what, your game piece? Some fuckin checker in a game with big brother?”

“Tommy...” Drista began, feeling her pent-up anger leave her body as he went on, “It’s not like that I promise...”

*"Then why didn't you save me?"* Tommy whispered, the overly big sleeves of Ranboo's sweater were balled up in his fists, locked in a death grip, and he was shaking with barely contained rage.

"Tommy,"

*"Why!?"* He shrieked, chest heaving. Tommy's eyes were ablaze as he continued to tremble with unbridled fury. Drista watched sadly as the silence stretched out between them.

"I told you," She managed, feeling something tight in her chest she'd never felt before, "We aren't supposed to interfere with mortals." Tommy looked like he wanted to interrupt, but she continued before he could. "I- I'm not even supposed to be doing this right now I mean, I'm gonna be in trouble for centuries but *Tommy*," she urged, and somehow the boy could feel her stare through the mask, "everything I'm doing right now is for you."

Tommy looked as though he was in pain, trying to swallow his own anger and listen to her. He was quiet for what felt like decades before letting out a sad laugh and shaking his head.

"This whole fuckin situation is the definition of good intentions, bad execution..." He muttered.

"I don't understand what I did wrong." Drista supplied unhelpfully, already moving past the conversation completely and hoping he would too. She didn't like the idea of Tommy being mad at her.

"Course you don't," Tommy glared, "you're a huge fuckin idiot, you are. They're all going to hate me Drista, they're going to see me for what I really am, and then- and then it'll be all your fault and-"

"What are you really, Tommy?" She interrupted. He looked up at her, something unreadable in his eyes. A million voices screamed different answers, all synonyms for one thing, in his mind.

“Fuck you.” He laughed bitterly.

The silence began once more.

---

Jack Manifold was sick. He had never had a very good stomach for violence and seeing Wilbur act with such malice had him reeling. That was all it was. He could care less about Tommy’s whines, could care less about Tommy in general.

*That’s not true*, a voice in his mind hissed, and he did everything within his power to block it out.

His whole life, Jack had just wanted to be *seen*. He wanted to be treated on equal par, and he wanted others to see him as someone deserving of their respect. He didn’t want to be unknown, some nobody on a server full of somebodies. He didn’t want to be constantly dismissed, to have his problems constantly looked over just because *“Tommy had it worse”*. Tommy could go fuck himself. He got himself into those situations.

*He didn’t, you saw he didn’t. Not there, at least. Not with Wilbur.*

*“Shut up!”* He whispered quietly to himself, ignoring the stares he got and gripping his temple with great stress.

Whatever then, maybe Pogtopia hadn’t necessarily been Tommy’s fault, but that didn’t mean exile wasn’t due to his own actions. It didn’t mean he had *any* right to kill others. Jack wasn’t going to let him get away scot-free just because he was a little roughed up on the edges.

Jack had spent every waking hour being looked down upon and forgotten, losing possession after possession and watching absolutely *no one* give a fuck. He wasn’t going to sit there and cry for Tommy when he hadn’t even gotten an apology from the boy. He wouldn’t let himself forgive so easily, that time. Either they would try for his favour or they’d die trying. He’d had enough of being so casually looked over; enough of being no one.



If Tommy wanted to garner pity, it wasn't working.

Deep down he knew; he knew that Tommy would never purposely try to gain pity. The boy *loathed* pity. He knew Tommy was prideful to a fault, and would never have plotted something like this, but it didn't stop him from insisting to himself that it was all some trick; that he couldn't let himself feel bad for even a moment.

Two rows ahead of him, he saw Karl whisper something in Sapnap's ear, and they both giggled. He scowled, feeling something crawling and clawing its way up from deep down inside of him, but swallowed it back down all the same.

He hated Tommy. That was all. Tommy was the reason he felt the way he did.

"I don't know how much more of this I can do..." Sam muttered quietly, frowning deeply. A couple of people seemed to agree with the statement. "I mean, Tommy obviously doesn't want us seeing this, isn't it... *wrong?* "

"It's not like we have a choice," Techno shrugged it off, "the quicker we sit through it, the quicker it's over."

Sam's eyes flicked over to where Tubbo was drying his eyes with the back of his forearm, sniffing quietly. Ranboo was silent, staring ahead blankly in a situation where he'd normally be fretting over his husband. "Yeah..." The warden nodded hesitantly.

The screen flickered to life, settling them all backdown.

**Tommy scuttered down the ravine, eyes alight and arms filled with diamond blocks. He had... that sort of look on his face; the one where you knew he knew he was doing something not necessarily in his best interest.**

**He ambled around, eyes scanning the walls, and dug out a one-block hole before filling it with the diamond block. He looked proud of himself, grinning and moving on.**

“What the hell is he doing?”

“Decoratin’.” Techno declared. He remembered the stupid blocks being everywhere.

“He’s a shit decorator.” George wrinkled his nose in disgust.

“That’s why all his houses are made out of dirt.” Karl laughed.

**“This is *ridiculous!*”**

**Wilbur’s unenthused voice rang through the halls of Pogtopia, echoing and bouncing off jagged rocks. He looked to be on call with someone, holding his communicator up to his ear. Tommy grew closer, still placing blocks at random.**

**“We’ve abided by all your laws. We’re exiled, not wanted criminals.” He hissed into the line, looking visibly upset. When he saw what Tommy was doing his eyes instantly widened. He reached his hand out and began to snap at the boy, clearly signaling for the boy to cease.**

**Tommy merely stared at him, as though he was confused, tilting his head like the little shit he was.**

**Wilbur’s nostrils flared as he pursed his lips, snapping more frantically and making gestures with his hands as he did.**

**Tommy placed a block while making eye contact with the man.**

“He is *so* fucking stupid...” Tubbo muttered, and though the statement was lighthearted, anyone could hear the dread in his tone. They were all feeling it.

Despite it all, Tommy had never stopped being a nuisance.

**“I’m gonna have to mute for a moment,” Wilbur declared suddenly into his communicator, eye twitching slightly. He shoved the device into his pocket angrily and glared at the blond. Tommy gave him a large grin.**

**“Tommy, what the fuck are you doing?” The man deadpanned.**

**“Making this place look better,” Tommy shrugged, turning on his heel, “it’s quite depressing, Wilbur. Much like you.” There was an undertone of fear laced in his voice, but he hid it well.**

**“Put the diamond blocks down!”**

**“Fuck you!”**

**Wilbur scowled, wordlessly picking up a moderately sized rock.**

“They used to do this all the time.” Phil put his head in his hands. He should have felt happy at the memory, and should have been able to reminisce, but Wilbur’s unstable and violent actions were much too fresh in his mind.

**He launched it at Tommy, hitting him square in the shoulder. The blond gasped momentarily, before whirling to glare at his brother.**

“Remember when Tommy threw that massive rock and it hit Wil right in the eye?” Techno grinned, “Had to keep him on bed rest for a week.”

“You make it sound like I *let* these fights happen,” Phil groaned, “They always did it behind my back.”

**Wordlessly, Wilbur threw another, hitting his brother again. There was a small amused grin on his face. Tommy seemed *elated* at some semblance of the older brother he knew, and played into it immediately.**

**He ender-pearled closer, staring Wil in the eyes. “You’re gonna regret it if you throw another one.”**

**Smirking, the older flicked a pebble at Tommy’s forehead. The latter scowled.**

**“Throw one more. I dare you.” He taunted.**

**Wilbur smiled, eyes warm with recognition for the first time in forever. He threw another rock.**

“So they had rock fights as kids... for fun...” Ranboo trailed off, not really knowing what to say. Phil chuckled.

“Living on a farm away from almost everyone and everything with only your brothers can get pretty boring. It wasn’t like we had any sports equipment or anything either. Rock fights were all the rage.”

“Humans are so weird...”

**Tommy silently bent down low, straining slightly as he picked up a large rock about half the size of his head. Wilbur’s smile slipped from his face as he turned on his heel,**

booking it to avoid being hit by it.

**“Stop!”** He laughed, watching as Tommy picked up another rock, an even bigger one.

**“Say sorry, bitch!”** The blond declared, fingers itching with the need to *launch* the thing, **“Say you like my decorating skills!”**

Phil smiled sadly at the screen, watching his two boys as they laughed. That’s what it was supposed to be like. What he was seeing, *that* was the Wilbur and Tommy he knew so well.

**“Tommy,”** A voice crackled through Wilbur’s pocket, making both of them go deathly quiet as it did, **“Y’know I’m hiring and I am *all* for public displays of wealth.”**

**Any semblance of comradery between the two instantly went down the drain the second Schlatt spoke. Wilbur’s eyes glazed over, returning to the cold ones that Tommy knew all too well.**

*You lost him again,* Tommy thought angrily to himself, *he’s gone. Again.*

**He looked his big brother up and down, suddenly feeling his heart rate increase. He wanted Wilbur back. He hated this Wilbur.**

**A small, barely noticeable smile grew on his face.**

**“Oh no…”** Tubbo muttered, eyes going wide.

**“What?”** Puffy looked concerned.

“That’s his ‘I’m gonna do something awful because I’m angry’ face...” The ram hybrid looked greatly distressed.

“Wouldn’t that just be his face in general then?” Techno quirked a brow. Fundy let out a little bark of laughter before instantly trying to smother it. Technoblade terrified him, if he was being honest, and after the butcher army he doubted they were on good enough terms for him to be laughing at the guy’s jokes.

**“Really?” He replied to Schlatt, voice high and polite and *fake*. Wilbur looked livid.**

**“Oh for sure,” The president of Manberg spoke, “I’d let you put diamond blocks wherever you wanted.”**

**Wilbur sucked in a large breath, fists clenching and unclenching. Tommy barely spared him a glance, walking towards the nether portal.**

**“Where the fuck are you going?” He demanded, watching the younger go. “Where the fuck are you going?” He began to follow, hot on Tommy’s heels.**

**The boy picked up his speed.**

**“Get back here!” Wilbur growled, and Tommy *laughed*, before turning around from inside the portal and flipping off his brother with both hands. He disappeared not a second later.**

“Why would he...?” Quackity was gesturing vaguely at the screen, fidgeting uncomfortably, “I mean he knows Wilbur’s like...”

“It’s Tommy.” Fundy smiled sadly. “Dude wouldn’t stop being a little shit even in the face of death.... which I guess we’ve seen one or two times already.

**“Zero self-preservation skills.” Karl noted.**

Ranboo frowned. Curling in on himself even more. It wasn't just a lack of self-preservation, it was self-destructive. Tommy was well aware that Wilbur wasn't in a place to be toyed with, and yet he still did it.

He was egging the man on. He knew what he was doing, knew the possible consequences for his actions, and yet he still did it. Why?

**“Hey Wilbur,” Tommy’s amused voice buzzed from Wil’s communicator, “come to the nether dickhead.”**

**The man looked down at the device, gripping it so hard it was a miracle it didn’t break. He looked livid. Without a word, he stepped through the portal. What greeted him was multiple blocks of diamonds placed in awkward positions above the lava. Tommy was leaning up against the wall grinning, but there was anger hidden in his eyes.**

**“Fuck you.” Was all the blond said.**

**The scene shifted to a haggard-looking Wilbur dragging Tommy back through the portal, all the diamonds in his inventory. He was seething silently, his younger brother’s wrist held so tightly he knew it would bruise.**

**Without so much as an ounce of hesitation, he threw Tommy onto the cold floor, staring down at him. The latter said nothing, merely glaring up.**

**“Do it.” Tommy whispered.**

**“What the fuck?”**

Everyone in the room was confused, staring with wide eyes.

**“Do what?” Wilbur scoffed, rolling his eyes.**

**“Hit me.” Tommy urged, looking a bit desperate, “Hit me and then say you’re sorry! Pretend you care and say you’ll never do it again until the next time I piss you off! Until the next time I leave without asking or fuck up!” He was shaking, laying on his front on the stone, propped up on his forearms.**

**Wilbur said nothing, watching the boy with his piercing gaze. They spent a good minute in silence before the elder relented, laughing quietly to himself. He crouched down, smiling gently and cupping Tommy’s cheek.**

**The younger looked concerned, as if readying himself for his brother’s wrath.**

**“I would never hit you, Tommy.” Wilbur tilted his head, a sad smile on his face. “Why would you ever say that?”**

Ranboo suddenly felt very sick. Tommy had been purposely acting out with the sole goal of getting his brother to hit him. He wracked his mind over and over, trying to think, but still, he couldn’t think of *why*.

**Tommy blanched, as though he was disappointed. He drew his brows together, confused. “But-”**

**“I love you, Toms.” Wilbur crooned, interrupting the boy. His touch was gentle and caring, like that the blond had used to know.**

**Tommy looked white as a sheet.**

Puffy sat quietly, trying to figure out why Tommy would *want* Wilbur to hit him, and also why Wilbur *hadn’t*.



The older man had looked very close to it, clearly furious, but after looking Tommy over he seemed to grow... somewhat intrigued. He fell back on himself, and his whole demeanor had changed.

Tommy had seemed to be encompassed by a large cloud of rage, but also desperation. His disobedience didn't... it didn't make sense.

**Wilbur sauntered off rather quickly after that, disappearing into the shadows and humming a tune to himself.**

*What's wrong with you?* Tommy thought to himself, still on the ground. He gritted his teeth, glaring harshly down at the ground. He stood, wiping the snot from his nose with his sleeve as his eyes watered. *Why would you ask him to do that? He loves you.*

**"He doesn't love me." He said aloud, though no one was around to hear it. "H-He doesn't he *hits* me..."**

*When you deserve it. He thought bitterly back, And sometimes even when you do deserve it he doesn't. It's because he loves you. You even tried to get him to hit you there and he didn't. Because he loves you.*

**"No," He grabbed fistfuls of his hair, pulling at them, "No no no no..."**

*You want to leave him. He loves you and you want to leave him. You promised you'd never leave him. You're a terrible brother. Dad and Techno would be so disappointed in y-*

**"Shut up!" He shrieked, slamming his fist against the stone wall as he panted. He slid down, pulling his knees up close to his chest.**

**"I won't. I won't leave. I'll stay, I swear."**

**The screen faded to black.**

Oh.

*Oh.*

Ranboo blindly grabbed for Tubbo's hand as he stared at the black screen, not resting until he found it. Tubbo squeezed it once.

Tommy had been trying to get Wilbur to hit him to validate his feelings toward the man. He'd been scared and wanted to leave and yet he felt guilty for it. He needed Wilbur to act out against him to help himself feel more in the right.

Instead, Wilbur had acted with love, and it had sent Tommy spiraling.

Ranboo so badly wanted to rush to the ravine. To find his friend and tell him to run, to leave, and never look back. He wanted to find Tommy and tell him to *never* feel guilty for something like that; that he *deserved* to leave.

But it had already happened, and Tommy had never left.

"Fucking hell..." Quackity sighed, running a hand through his hair.

"W-We all understand what Tommy was trying to do, right?"

The silence felt like a big enough yes. Puffy had no doubt certain people in the room had found a way to twist it on the boy, but she'd deal with them later. In that moment? All she could do was keep herself from breaking down.

“Why didn’t he *leave*...” Karl whispered hollowly, tears rolling down his cheeks. He wasn’t really looking for an answer, he knew why. He just couldn’t bear the thought of Tommy staying through it all because of how much he loved Wilbur. It felt so fucking unfair to him.

All they could really do was pray that Wilbur’s death would come sooner, as morbid and awful as it sounded. No one, well not most of them at least, *wanted* Wilbur dead, but it seemed that was the only way to free Tommy. Even Phil found himself sitting there wishing so badly that it was over.

They couldn’t stand to see Wilbur doing those things.

Come his death, everything would be fine.

# No Children

## Chapter Summary

pre-festival hurt.

TRIGGER WARNINGS: manipulation, disordered eating & i think that's it!

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Niki was, in all honesty, at her fucking limit. She'd spent the last few memories in a sort of haze, pleading with any higher being listening that it was all some sick dream. Every time the Wilbur onscreen spoke or acted, it felt like pieces of her were crumbling. She'd built herself around the image of Wilbur Soot. He was one of the few who never spoke over her, who made her feel *heard*.

She couldn't stand to watch him do such wretched things.

The Wilbur she'd known, or at least thought she'd known, would have *never* done anything even similar to what she had seen. He wouldn't. It just didn't make sense.

Niki had built her beliefs, her priorities, *everything* on the man she thought Wilbur was. He had inspired her to take a stand, to make herself seen. She had wanted to forever extend his legacy, to praise his name, because he was the only one who ever truly understood her.

Seeing him act out, she didn't know how to process it.

Memories of picnics under the L'Mantree, of baking cakes for Fundy's birthday, of *everything* really, came flooding back, as though she'd repressed them all, and only been able to remember L'Manberg under Schlatt's regime.

She wondered if there had been signs she'd missed. Signs of Wilbur cracking, of a mental state already degraded. Could she be to blame? Could Fundy, Tubbo, Jack? Was it their fault for not noticing something was wrong with Wilbur?

Without even really trying to, her mind drifted to Tommy, and she wondered if *he* had seen anything. He was the boy who spent the most time with Wilbur, did he just not care? Or was it that he loved his big brother too much to see red flags?

Despite her rage and distaste for him, Niki would *never* blame him for what had happened to him between those walls. He was a kid. It wasn't his fault.

But that didn't stop her from wondering if Tommy had made things worse by purposely acting out, by being rude and loud. Would things have gone better if Wilbur had chosen someone actually adequate? Would he perhaps have shouldered less of a burden if Tommy had been able to take things seriously?

Niki felt for the boy, she did, but she didn't want to pin everything on Wilbur either. The man had clearly been facing an uphill battle within his own mind that none of them would ever know.

She didn't want to paint him as a villain... he *wasn't*. He was hurting and sick and had needed help.

But... maybe she was starting to realize Tommy hadn't been the cause of Wilbur's descent. Maybe she was starting to realize that Tommy hadn't 'taken' Wilbur from her like she'd thought.

Don't get her wrong, she still loathed the kid. He was rude and annoying and took and took and took without asking, but she could no longer pin the blame of losing Wilbur on him.

It *was* fucked up what Wilbur had done, and while he had needed help, Niki was finally starting to see that Tommy should never have been expected to be the one to get him that help.

She'd been done trying to kill Tommy for a while, and though she was still angry, still didn't like him, she felt like she owed an apology for the things she'd said about the prior memories including him and Wilbur.

Tommy didn't care about her, that much was obvious (he didn't care about *anyone* but himself), but it was okay because she didn't care about him either. The apology she owed was to clear her own conscience, not alleviate him of anything.

Rows ahead of her, Tubbo and Ranboo were whispering quietly to themselves, both looking thoroughly disturbed. Ranboo's tail was flicking around nervously, brows drawn together, and Tubbo looked furious.

"I just... how much more is there that I didn't know?" Tubbo ran a hand through his hair, frowning deeply.

"It's not your fault Tubbo." Ranboo hummed, gripping onto his husband's hand for dear life.

"No no, I know," Tubbo shook his head, laughing slightly, "I know don't worry..." he went quiet, pursing his lips, "but why didn't he *tell me*? Does he not trust me?"

Ranboo looked stricken. He opened his mouth to reply, but was stopped by the screen flickering back to life.

"We'll talk later." He assured, giving Tubbo's hand a squeeze as they both braced themselves for whatever it was they were going to see next.

**Tommy knocked apprehensively at the wooden door before him. He stood in one of the side corridors, torches dimly lighting the area, waiting in front of a room closed off.**

**"Wil?" He called, grabbing the knob, "I'm coming in."**

**He gently pushed the door open, taking a hesitant step inside, and felt his heart drop. His older brother was sitting at his desk, fingers massaging his temples roughly as he stared holes into the papers below him. His cheeks were sunken in, eyes dull and lifeless. He looked too much like a corpse.**

**“I’m busy, Tommy.” Wilbur muttered, eyes never leaving the papers. Tommy’s brows drew together, frowning deeply.**

**“Did you eat anything today?” Tommy asked, taking another step closer towards the man.**

**“Busy.” Wilbur answered, short and clipped, and Tommy looked as though the answer physically pained him.**

**The room itself was a mess. Bed unmade and sheets covered in spots of blood and grime. There were clothes and papers on the floor, as well as a shattered picture frame facedown.**

**“Wil please,” Tommy tried, “You need to eat. Just a bit.”**

Phil felt his heart break in two, watching his youngest care for his older brother. The guilt he’d been feeling of only showing up on the server once Wilbur was beyond salvation seemed to grow tenfold at the sight.

He took a sharp breath, tears pricking at his eyes. He should have been there. He should have been there to take care of his son. He should have been there, not Tommy.

It wasn’t fair for the teen to put that burden on his shoulders.

**Wilbur laughed, rolling his eyes as he scribbled something down on the edge of one of the papers. His fingerless gloves made an odd sort of swiping sound as they brushed against the parchment, and his fingers were black with soot and ash.**

**“Tommy I’m fi-”**

**“No. You’re not.” Tommy interrupted, staring holes into the back of his older brother’s head because *Wilbur wouldn’t look at him*. “I- know how you barely eat, barely sleep. H-how when you *do* sleep, it’s after crying- Wil I can *hear* you crying at night...”**

Technoblade knew exactly what Tommy was talking about. Sometimes late at night he still heard Wilbur’s cries, echoing off the stone walls of the ravine, forever trapped in the wretched place. It had broken a piece of him; hearing his twin cry out at night. There were a couple of times he’d tried to reach out, and offered to sleep in Wil’s room or keep watch while he slept, but Wilbur always grew upset at the attempts, lashing out and saying things they both knew he never really meant.

It still hurt, however, and Techno found himself spending more and more nights out searching for materials, trying to escape the screams.

**There was silence, Wilbur still looking down as Tommy continued to stare at him pointedly, the younger’s face pinched painfully as though he was trying to keep himself together.**

**“Please let me help you Wil.” Tommy urged, eyes pleading and desperate. Wilbur didn’t answer for a moment, hunched in place at the desk and eyes narrowed. He was arguing with himself it seemed, lips mouthing words he was no doubt thinking.**

**With a large sigh, he let his pen drop to the desk, swiveling in his chair and leveling Tommy with a blank gaze.**

**“What makes you think I want your help?” He demanded, blinking tiredly. The bags under his eyes had grown somewhat worse.**



Niki felt her heart lurch at the sight. It felt so *cruel* to be shown memories of her best friend in such a state when he was already dead; like she was being taunted.

**“You keep snapping at Techno ‘cause you’re scared,” Tommy said, head tilted as he took a tentative step forward, “you won’t reach out to *anyone* ‘cause you’re scared of them leaving.”**

**He closed the gap between them, staring Wilbur in his eyes.**

**“I won’t ever leave you Wil.” He announced, a fire burning in his eyes. It was so evident that he was beyond determined to keep the promise. “You can let me help you. I will *never* leave. I promise.”**

Tubbo wanted to scream. He wanted to cry out to his friend to run and never look back. It felt painful to watch knowing he could do nothing.

**Wilbur stared at him for a moment, face completely unreadable, before surging forward, wrapping Tommy in a tight hug before the younger could even blink, holding him close. Tommy let out a startled gasp, rearing back slightly, but quickly reciprocated, enclosing his older brother in his arms. He didn’t speak as he felt Wilbur’s shoulders begin to shake, nor when he felt little droplets landing on the back of his tee.**

**“I’m so sorry,” Wilbur whispered, voice hoarse, “you don’t deserve this.”**

**“I love you Wil.” Was all Tommy replied, burying his face in the older’s chest, “I not going anywhere.”**

**The screen faded to black.**

“Oh, Tommy...” Puffy sniffled, feeling her heart twist at the sight.

“This is just fucking awful...” Fundy muttered, “What are we... Like what are we gaining from this? Other than y’know, nightmare fuel.”

No one had an answer for him, but they were all somewhat wondering the same thing, save for a certain couple.

Ranboo couldn’t help but be slightly *relieved* at the situation at hand, despite how terrible that sounded. Don’t mistake what he was trying to say; he was truly horrified for Tommy, and wished *so so* badly that the boy hadn’t had to relive the things he did, but a small part of him felt that something akin to what they were doing had been needed for quite some time.

He was just *worried* about Tommy. His friend was so widely despised, so hated, and it seemed he never actively tried to combat it. He just... let people hate him. And it always ended badly. Ranboo knew for a fact that there were three separate groups of people ‘keeping an eye’ on Tommy at the moment, and couldn’t help the exasperation that came with the knowledge.

He and Tubbo had already lost Tommy once, they weren’t anywhere near open to going through it again.

But Tommy wouldn’t *listen*. He didn’t tell people what had happened to him. For god’s sake, even Ranboo himself was convinced he only knew a sliver of what Tommy had been through, and he knew he was one of the people who knew the most about the blond’s past. It didn’t sit right with him at all.

And of course, Tubbo had a tendency to lie about his past. Ranboo still had no idea of the origin of his scars, and not a clue how he’d lost his second life, but it was... different. Tubbo was... well... no offense to Tommy but Tubbo was loved. Maybe not completely universally, but close. The server saw him as a kind kid. They liked him. And while they greatly misinterpreted who Tubbo was as a person, it was better for them to assume the ram hybrid was some innocent sensitive bystander incapable of hurting a fly than for them to assume he was a heartless villain deserving of death like they did Tommy.

So, while Ranboo was extremely discouraged it had come to something so... drastic. He couldn't help but somewhat agree with the godly being behind it all. The people on the server needed to see what Tommy had been through or the boy wouldn't make it to his eighteenth birthday.

It was wrong... but somehow it had reached a point where it felt necessary.

**The screen displayed a forest just outside of Manberg. It was dark and growing darker, the sun almost having completely set.**

**Wilbur and Tommy trudged through the woods wordlessly, both seemingly deflated and discouraged. The blond had a bow clenched tightly in his hands and a sack of arrows slung across his shoulders.**

**They marched past a creek in silence, Tommy taking a moment to stare at the frogs and lilies. Their boots made soft sounds on the grassy ground of the forested area, and occasionally you could hear the sound of a twig snapping or an animal racing through the bushes.**

Sam had been picking up on how much Tommy adored wildlife, and it made him smile sadly. The boy loved to play with bugs and, sometimes, talk to them (which he thought was a bit weird but whatever). He loved to simply stare at mobs in awe, as if each time was his very first time seeing them. It was unbelievably endearing, but also a bit of a hassle when they'd been building the hotel, as Tommy would get distracted very easily if even one ant somehow found its way into his line of sight.

**Wilbur stopped in his tracks, face shadowed over as he turned to look at Tommy. The younger looked tired but still intrigued.**

**"Tommy I have a question for you." Wilbur said, looking conflicted.**

**"Yeah?"**

**“This... Schlatt’s festival, yeah? It doesn’t seem like a bad- like a bad idea. It doesn’t seem evil, y’know?” The older man’s voice had gone a tad higher, something it often did when he was anxious. Tommy eyed his brother, taking in the hunch in his shoulders and the uncertainty in his tone. He furrowed his brow.**

**“...Yeah?”**

**“Tommy, are we the bad guys?”**

**“Asked the war criminal.” Quackity snickered, earning a slap to the shoulder from Karl.**

**Suddenly the background noise around them seemed much louder as they stared at one another. The frogs in the creek croaked loudly, echoing throughout the night, and the wind howled in their ears. Tommy didn’t know what to say to that, only staring blankly.**

**“Schlatt...” Wilbur anxiously cracked his knuckles, eyes flitting from side to side, “I mean he won the election fair and square... It was completely legal... And now we’re trying to overthrow him.”**

**Tommy still said nothing.**

**“Tommy, am I a villain in this story? Am I the villain in your history?” Wilbur pressed, that time silently demanding an answer from the boy. There was no verbal threat, nor hints at a physical one in any way, but somehow Tommy knew he had to answer.**

**“No.” The blond said simply, not offering anything else. Wilbur quirked a brow at him.**

**“Why not?”**

Tommy sighed, running a hand through his hair, a habit he'd picked up from Wilbur himself. "Cause we started L'Manberg..." He blinked a couple of times, pausing as if to only then fully take into account his brother's words, "And we should've won that vote."

"We allowed the coalition, Tommy." Wilbur chimed in unhelpfully, "Our arrogance and our cockiness got in the way."

Tommy scowled at that, as if growing frustrated. It was even darker by then, and the moonlight was casting Wilbur's shadow over Tommy.

Ranboo didn't like the way Wilbur was asking Tommy those things, as if it were up to him to decide. Tommy shouldn't have to be debating whether his big brother who he'd loyally follow into death was a villain. It just didn't feel right.

"Tommy I... I really do think we're the villains." Wilbur gave an incredulous laugh. His long coat flapped in the wind, hands shoved into his pockets to keep them from the cold.

Tommy didn't say anything... which was odd. He was normally very talkative and well, *Tommyish*, but there seemed to be none of that then. He was just... staring at Wilbur. His nose and cheeks were rosy in the cold.

Karl didn't like how *quiet* Tommy was being. He didn't know the kid well, they hadn't gotten much time to ever talk, but he knew for a fact Tommy was loud and opinionated and always spoke his mind. The version of himself on screen was... concerning.

Wilbur let out a sigh at the silence, rubbing his face. He flexed out his hands, grinning slightly. "You and me, we're both in the right? Right?" He licked his lips, "We're in the right here, aren't we?"

The blond shuffled awkwardly. He sniffled obnoxiously, swiping at his nose with his sleeve before shrugging. "I mean I'm always in the right."

“Classy.” Techno snorted.

**Wilbur didn’t waste a moment, his grin growing even wider as his eyes seemed to grow less warm. He spread his arms out wide, face alight with something that screamed danger. He chuckled darkly.**

**“Then let’s be the bad guys.”**

Many of them seemed to grow surprised at that, especially the ones who’d never known him.

“I thought his whole schtick was being the good guy?”

*“Shhhhh!”*

**Tommy just looked at him. Stared with that stupid look on his face. It was beginning to piss him off.**

**“Tommy,” He began, “think about it. Why not? I mean, our nation’s gone. Our nation is far behind us, Tommy.”**

**The younger finally reacted, though it wasn’t what he was hoping for. Tommy seemed to grow weary at his words, looking a bit repulsed. He didn’t bother with the kid’s feelings.**

**“Let’s blow that motherfucker to smithereens!” He laughed, exclaiming loudly.**

**Tommy remained quiet for a moment, staring his brother up and down.**

**“Wil...” He started, uncertain, “Are you feeling okay?”**

**It seemed that wasn’t the right thing to say, as Wilbur grew angry at the accusation that he was acting anywhere outside of sound mind. He grit his teeth, taking a step forward.**

**“Tommy I say, if we can’t have Manberg. No one, *NO ONE!* can have Manberg!”**

The loud cry sent many of them rearing back into their seats. Wilbur was *not* acting anywhere near sane in that moment. It was beyond disheartening to see the unknown side of a man they’d regarded as a hero. Even after an act so malicious, most still saw him as the man who had started a fight for freedom. Most people had respected him greatly.

**“Wilbur no,” Tommy tried, “I think we can do it! We can get it back!” He tried to reason.**

**“No no no no,” Wilbur shook his head, laughing, “this is a new era. I want to burn that place to the ground, Tommy. I want no crops to grow there ever again. *I want it all gone!* ”**

It was... oddly terrifying, seeing the former president of L’Manberg so ruined by it that he talked about it in that manner. Fundy felt sick to his stomach as he watched. L’Manberg had been their *home*. Even with it being a crater by then, the topic was still a sore spot for most.

**Tommy, who had been growing more disturbed the longer his brother went on, stomped his foot on the ground as he took a step forward. “Wil-”**

**“Tommy let’s be villains!” Wilbur smiled wide, looking gleeful.**

It was... concerning, to say the least. For most of them, well, all of them really, they’d never once expected to see Wilbur Soot, renowned hero, actively embracing the role of the villain.

“Oh, Wil...” Phil shook his head sadly. Why hadn’t he been there? Why hadn’t he noticed something was amiss in his son’s letters? He’d always loved hearing what his boy had to say. Wil would tell him of Tommy. Of how their little guy had sprouted up, almost rivaling his own impressive 6’5. He’d wanted to be there, and promised himself one day he would, but by the time he’d realized something was amiss... well it was already too late.

It was too late for their family.

**The scene quickly changed to the two standing in the cramped walls of Pogtopia, continuing their conversation. Tommy was following after Wilbur hurriedly, trying to reason with the man as he went on his tirade.**

**“Wilbur it’s not too far gone! There’s a reason we fought so hard for it! We can rebuild, bring it back to its former glory!”**

**Wilbur stopped, suddenly whirling around to stare down the boy. Tommy had to pretend he didn’t take a step back.**

**“You’re being reckless.” The blond stated.**

“What so he knew Wilbur wanted to blow the place up and didn’t do shit?” Jack asked, glaring angrily at the screen. “He could’ve stopped him!”

“Why didn’t he tell us?” Niki frowned, “I thought we were all on one team that day.”

Tension seemed to be growing in the room, and many people growing upset with the new information.

“Hey man, shut the fuck up,” Quackity interjected, shaking his head, “Tommy and I *both* knew. We both knew and we... we thought we’d talked him out of it...” He bowed his head in shame, “We knew he rigged the place but... we thought he wouldn’t do it.”



“That means nothing!” Fundy cried, “Wil died becaus-” He shut his mouth instantly, eyes going wide. The temperature in the room dropped instantly, and many people grew wary.

“What was that?” Quackity demanded, looking scarily calm.

“I...” The fox hybrid took a deep breath, “If you two had stopped him then- then he might’ve still been here but *you underestimated him and now he’s d-*”

“Fundy!” Phil cried, affronted. “We aren’t blaming anyone for what happened that day,” He scolded, “don’t pin this on Quackity.”

Fundy’s ears pinned back, looking ashamed, and Phil felt slightly bad for the tone he’d used.

“Look man,” The duck hybrid let out a shaky laugh, “If Tommy and I had thought there was even a *chance* that day would’ve ended with Wilbur dying we would have done something. We didn’t see it coming.”

There was a mournful silence.

“I think that’s enough.” Puffy frowned, “No one’s to blame, okay? Let’s just... let’s keep watching, yeah?”

As the others settled back down, Puffy leaned back into her seat, letting out a sigh. She thanked every god she could imagine that Tommy hadn’t been in the room for that brief altercation. The last thing that boy needed was to be told he was responsible for Wilbur’s actions. Even if Fundy’s anger was justified and coming from a place of hurt, his words solved nothing, and she doubted they gave even him any sort of solace.

**A deep, mirthy laugh bubbled in Wilbur’s throat. He bowed his head, grinning darkly as the shadows covered his face. When he looked up, he bore the eyes of a stranger, and**

**Tommy took a startled step back.**

**“I know why you’re doing this, Tommy.” He smiled wide, folding his hands behind his back and taking a step forward. His boots echoed in the large empty space. Techno was gone, off somewhere neither of them bothered themselves to ever learn. The dusty jagged walls of Pogtopia seemed to be closing in. “I know... I see it in your eyes, I can hear it in your voice!”**

**Tommy tensed, eyes going wide as his brother’s tone became more menacing. His shoulders hiked up, heart beating quicker.**

**In that moment, there was no Schlatt, nor was there Dream. There were no villains for miles...**

**And yet Tommy was the most scared he’d ever been.**

Puffy fucking *hated* it. She absolutely abhorred the fear Wilbur made Tommy feel. Her heart went out to the man in so many different ways, and she knew he had needed help, but first and foremost came the fact that he was harming others. She couldn’t stand to see the way his behavior and demeanor affected Tommy.

**“Tommyinnit, you’re scared.” Wilbur declared gleefully, voice dripping with honey. Tommy swallowed thickly, eyes flicking down to the ground as though he was ashamed.**

**“Tommyinnit, you’re scared that people are going to think differently of you, Tommy,” The taller man took two steps in the boy’s direction till they were lined at the hip, Tommy staring forwards down into the tunnel that lead to L’Manberg, and Wilbur entranced by the shadowed corners of the end of their tunnel. “When I said you’re never going to be president, you’ve gotta understand! That wasn’t- that wasn’t a challenge, that’s true.”**

**He put a firm hand on Tommy’s shoulder, not looking at him, but bringing himself close enough to whisper into the boy’s ear. “ *You’re never gonna be president, Tommy.* ”**

Sapnap let out a low uncomfortable breath, squirming in his seat. The whole thing felt undeniably wrong. He had the uncontrollable urge to get Wilbur *away* from Tommy, but he could do nothing.

**The blond's breath hitched, trying to remain calm. The torches in the hall seemed to waver, their flames growing smaller. Despite the fact that it had been uttered so quietly to Tommy, he swore he could hear it echoing off the walls.**

**“And I can hear it in your voice, you're trying to sound like you know what you're doing.” Wilbur's grin widened. He turned, grabbing Tommy's face with his hand and manually turning it so that their gazes were interlocked. His eyes were crazed and cold, no semblance of *Wilbur* anywhere in them as they bore straight ahead, mangling the terrified blue eyes of his younger brother.**

**“Tommy,” He smiled breathlessly, gripping the boy's chin tight, “None of us know what we're doing.”**

**With that he pushed Tommy back, the latter stumbling on his feet, and whirled around, spreading his arms out and reaching his fingers up to the ceiling meters above. He turned again, staring Tommy down. The grin never left his face.**

**“We're fucked. We were fucked the minute we were thrown out!” He hissed.**

**Tommy took a moment to regain his balance, shrinking in on himself. Wilbur began to pace back and forth, an unusual amount of jovial light in his eyes, though it felt sinister.**

Jack tried to ignore the sort of anger bubbling within him. It was a conscious battle with his own mind. He didn't fucking care about what was happening to Tommy, he *didn't*.

His brain just hadn't gotten the memo.

**“Schlatt’s a smart man. He knows that if we fight him, even if we beat him, we’ve lost. Tommy, there’s no in-between, he knows we’ve lost.” His voice almost wavered for just a moment before returning to its grandiose, “But you know what?”**

**He snaked forwards, curling himself around Tommy and standing behind him, placing two firm hands on the boy’s shoulders, ignoring the way they shook. Tommy grit his teeth, clenching his fists and staring at the ground.**

**“At times like this, when a man has nothing to lose do you know what that means?” He cooed, not missing the way that Tommy seemed to be completely frozen in his grip.**

**“... What does it mean?” Tommy practically whispered.**

**Wilbur laughed once more, manually turning the boy around so they were face to face. He grinned wide. “It means we can do what we want.”**

**“We have a man on our side who literally rigged our nation with TNT. We can do the same to them,” Wilbur’s eyes lit up at that, glazing over, “we can rig this festival with TNT... we can kill them all, Tommy!”**

Everyone felt thoroughly disturbed by that. No one had a single clue they could’ve all died at that festival, and suddenly hearing about it almost felt like they had narrowly escaped a terrible fate. Wilbur had completely lost himself.

**Tommy’s eyes widened as he wrenched himself out of Wilbur’s vice-like grip, stumbling backward. Somehow, when he wasn’t paying attention, the flames had grown, roaring with contempt as though they were cheering Wilbur on. The walls felt as though they would crush him alive.**

**“No... no,” He shook his head, horrified, “no-”**

**Wilbur laughed, throwing his head back before leveling his brother with a stare. “Tommy have you not noticed?” He gleamed, “Everyone who’s claiming to be on our side, they’re lying to us!”**

**“ *No!*” Tommy hissed, pulling at his hair.**

**“Tubbo?” Wilbur tilted his head, reveling in the way Tommy seized up at the mere mention of the name,**

Tubbo went still.

**“he’s lying to you man! He would drop-”**

**“No.”**

**“-us at the *second* he realizes we’re not in the lead anymore-”**

**“ *Stop it!*” Tommy cried, shoving Wilbur back. The man fell flat onto the ground, never losing his smile as he stared up at Tommy. The silence between them was suffocating as the blond panted, eyes wide and watery. He swallowed thickly, looking down.**

Tubbo had to hold onto his husband's hand for dear life, breaths coming out in short gasps of rage. His chest felt tight, as if he was unable to breathe properly. Why had Wilbur said that?

Had... Had Tommy believed him?

Tommy seemed to believe every little thing his big brother said, and Tubbo suddenly felt very sick at the thought of Tommy being made to think Tubbo didn’t care about him.

He could *never* not care about Tommy.

**“Wilbur you’re being reckless.” He sighed, “You’re not being the man that came in as president, alright?”**

**Wilbur said nothing, staring.**

**“This isn’t the right thing to do, this isn’t the *moral* thing to do.” Tommy hugged his arms to his chest, looking exhausted, “what’s the point in doing anything if you’ve lost all hope?” He asked quietly.**

“Mhm, cause Tommy always does the moral thing...” Techno snarked. Jack laughed lightly.

It was... harder to make jokes belittling Tommy, but it wasn’t impossible. It didn’t feel *wrong* by any means, but for some reason, it did weigh heavy in their minds.

Whatever, the feeling would pass. They were just pitying the pathetic kid. It would go away.

**Wilbur still didn’t reply.**

**“You’ve gotta stay with it,” Tommy murmured, “You’ve gotta pull yourself together.”**

**Wilbur looked down finally, smiling at the ground. He sniffed, “I-”**

**“If you think this is the right thing to do... if you believe that... that rigging- *not lighting* , but rigging the place with TNT will give us the upper hand,” Tommy interrupted, not continuing until he had Wilbur’s full attention, “then I will follow you.”**

**The screen went dark, fading as the two stared at each other.**

“He didn’t tell anyone.” Niki hissed, looking heated, “We could have all died and he didn’t tell anyone!”

“He told me,” Tubbo interjected, garnering everyone’s attention. “Wilbur, I mean. Not Tommy, but he would have if Wilbur hadn’t.”

“And?” George pressed.

“And I went along with it.” The ram hybrid muttered quietly, “I was... I was in on it.”

“Why?” Jack whispered. Tubbo smiled sadly at him.

“I’m just Wilbur’s yes-man, right? I just...” He paused, looking down at his scarred hands, “actually it doesn’t matter,” he muttered, “we all know how the festival went. There’s no point in talking about what-ifs.”

Everyone seemed content at that, except for a very confused Ranboo and Puffy.

Secretly Puffy was eternally grateful towards Tubbo for shifting the attention to himself, though another part of her wished he hadn’t. Niki and the others had sounded so *upset* with Tommy for not telling anyone, for following Wilbur. How did they not realize the boy was *terrified* of acting against his older brother?

They lapsed into silence, the screen starting back up.

**“Wilbur please,” Tommy pleaded, chasing after his brother. They were just outside the above-ground entrance to Pogtopia, Wilbur striding forward towards the door, “You have to eat something.”**

**The skies were grey, cloudy, and dreary. The dismal weather had Tommy shivering, jacket forgotten inside. The wind was picking up, making loud whooshing noises as it swept through the large trees around them.**

**Wilbur stopped but didn't turn around, keeping his hand on the doorknob. "I'll eat when we win, Tommy." He muttered, "I'm too busy right now."**

**Tommy swallowed thickly, reaching out his arm, but the door slammed in his face, and he was left standing alone. He sighed, hugging himself tightly. For some reason, he couldn't force himself to follow past the door.**

Phil sighed, feeling like his heart was being torn in two. He *hated* having to see Tommy deal with those things, but more than anything he hated seeing the wreck Wilbur had become. He hated seeing how ruined his son was. How bad things had gotten.

**He sat on the grass wordlessly, feeling the cold through his clothes and running a hand through his messy hair. Small droplets began to fall sporadically. They were sparse and numbered, but he stuck his hand out all the same, letting the few that did fall hit his open palm.**

**He looked up to the skies, frowning still, as Wilbur's words echoed in his mind, reminding him of a time when things were better. He closed his eyes, laying down on the grass and practically melting into it.**

There it was again. The disgusting feeling crept into all of their hearts when they saw how comfortable Tommy was with the ground. He laid like his body had been built to be buried. He laid like he had been born to die.

***"Tommy please," A teenage Wilbur begged, face pinched with both desperation and concern, "you have to eat." He said, sitting at the kitchen table in their little cottage. Six-year-old Tommy was seated across from him, eyes barely even making it over the top.***



*The inside of their home was cozy, decorated head to toe in little figurines and with silly little signs that said things like ‘Bless This Mess’ and such. Photographs lined almost every other empty space, both on the walls and on any surface the frames would fit. In them were pictures of mostly Techno, Wilbur, and Tommy, though Phil made an occasional appearance in the more formal photos. Near the front door, there were four hooks. On one of them was a large grey coat, fuzzy and worn down. On the second was a little red raincoat paired with a duck hat and yellow duck rain boots on the floor beneath them. The other two hooks were bare.*

Phil couldn't help but smile at the sigh, tears pricking in his vision. He saw Techno's ear twitch and though it was no 'big' reaction, he knew the other was affected as well.

He wished so badly he could have stuck around. He wished so badly he could have watched Tommy grow up in that house.

“Remember when Tommy wanted an excuse to use his new rain gear and he nearly flooded the house?” Techno smirked.

Phil laughed loudly. How could he have forgotten? Their wooden floors had been forever warped since that day.

*“No!” Tommy cried, tears building in his eyes as he shook his head stubbornly, “M’ not eating until Dad and Technoblade come home!”*

Phil's heart stopped, and he felt Techno stiffen beside him. Attention in the room seemed to draw to them.

*It was raining outside.*

*Wilbur sighed, putting his head in his hands. He removed his glasses, rubbing at his eyes. Before them on the table was an assortment of fruits and snacks, but they looked untouched.*

***“They’re not coming home, Tommy,” Wilbur tried, sadly, “I- I can’t keep telling you they are, I just can’t...”***

Phil nearly broke into tears right there. His son sounded so defeated. Every time he asked Wilbur it was always ‘No no, Tommy’s easy when you aren’t around’ and ‘Don’t worry I’ve got it covered’, but suddenly he felt very, very sick.

For fuck’s sake Tommy was *six* and refusing to eat in the hopes that his hunger strike would bring back the other half of his family.

***Tommy sucked in a large breath at that, eyes going wide as his face went red. He was pouting, tears ready to spill at any moment. He kicked the table leg, letting out a low whine as he banged his fists on the table.***

***“I want Dad and Technoblade!” He demanded, legs kicking restlessly beneath him.***

***“Tommy plea-”***

***“No!”***

***A small piece of Wilbur seemed to break at that, and he promptly burst into tears, burying his face in his arms as he sobbed into the table. His shoulders shook as he cried, not even trying to hide it from the younger boy. He was just so Tired.***

Niki wanted to cry, seeing her deceased best friend as a mere child, raising his kid brother on his own. It hurt so badly that she couldn’t comfort him even now. There was no ‘sorry you had to go through that’ because he was dead. He was dead.

***Tommy stopped, mid-tantrum, to stare at his big brother worriedly. His face creased with concern and worry, not used to ever seeing his brother cry, especially like that. If he ever did it was because Techno stole his toys or he didn’t want to do the dishes, this was different.***

*He watched Wilbur cry for a few moments, his own tears drying from his eyes, before silently reaching out and grabbing a sliced strawberry from the plate in front of him and popping it into his mouth. Then again.*

*They continued like that for a few minutes; Wilbur facedown crying into the lace tablecloth and Tommy quietly eating the fruit from his plate.*

*Eventually, Wilbur's cries quieted, save for a few sniffles, and red-rimmed eyes peeked out from the crook of his elbow. When he saw Tommy's plate almost half-empty he smiled sadly.*

*Wordlessly, he stood, making his way to the other end of the table and kneeling by Tommy's chair. He grabbed the child, clutching him tight to his chest and burying his face in the blond hair. Tommy was quietly trying to grab a grape just out of his reach.*

*"I love you so much." Wilbur mumbled, his voice muffled. Tommy grinned, pausing his attempts at grabbing the fruit to hug his brother back happily.*

*"I love you too Wilby!" He laughed.*

Puffy had to refrain from audibly cooing at the sight. It was unbelievably saddening but Tommy was so *cute*. Her heart nearly broke in two watching the young Wilbur cry into the table. No kid should ever be left alone like that.

"...Why weren't you there?" Tubbo whispered, looking down at the ground.

Phil didn't seem surprised by the question, only smiling sadly. He gripped the fabric of his clothes tight, knuckles turning white. "I wanted to be, I swear."

“Then why weren’t you?” Tubbo pressed, turning around to face the man, “They needed you, Phil.”

The winged man wanted to cry, heart lodged in his throat. He opened his mouth to reply, but was stopped by another voice.

“It was my fault.” Techno muttered, eyes downcast. He seemed oddly ashamed. Phil instantly turned to his son, shaking his head.

“Tech it wasn’t your fault,” He disagreed, “you couldn’t control them you-”

“I almost killed Tommy, Phil.” The piglin hybrid hissed, voice dripping with venom. His large hands were balled into fists. “You should have let me go alone.”

“And if something had happened to you?” Phil whispered, “I wouldn’t’ve been able to live with myself.”

Techno laughed lowly. “Can you live with yourself after seeing that?” He gestured to the screen. His father placed a gentle hand on his shoulder.

“I made my choice.” He said simply, “That’s a burden for me to bear alone. You had no part in it.”

Technoblade managed a laugh, though it was defeated. He sent a glare to their audience, and they all reared back.

Alright, there was definitely something more, that was for sure. However, none of them had the guts to ask what their past choices had entailed. It felt... rude. Phil was already going through a lot, and for all they knew it could be shown in an upcoming memory.

They let it go, for the time being.

**“-mmy!”**

**“-ommy!”**

**Tommy’s eyes snapped open before quickly closing once more to keep the water out of them. He raised his forearm over them to shield himself from the onslaught above, opening his eyes once more and blinking blearily.**

**He was outside in the rain, soaked to the bone, laying in the grass. Wilbur was nudging him in the ribs with the toe of his boot, hands shoved into the pockets of his trenchcoat, looking down with a monotone expression.**

**Tubbo felt his chest swell with anger, though not directed at Tommy or even Wilbur. It just... it hurt him to see his best friend lying in the cold like that. He didn’t know how to process what he was feeling but he was pissed off.**

**“What the hell are you doing in the rain?” Wilbur asked, quirking a brow.**

**“I fell asleep.” Was all Tommy could answer, still disoriented and voice raspy.**

**“Fucking idiot.” Wilbur scoffed, rolling his eyes. He muttered something unintelligible to himself before beginning to walk away, disappearing into the dark forest.**

**With a sigh, Tommy let his arm fall back to the ground. He shivered, raindrops slipping from his tear ducts.**

**He missed his big brother.**

**“This is just sad shit after sad shit...” Quackity huffed, “I’m fuckin tired of it man.”**

“I don’t wanna see anymore...” Karl whispered, drawing his knees to his chest.

Phil remained silent, heart aching for his youngest.

**It was just minutes before the festival. Lanterns had been strung up across the buildings, though they wouldn’t be too attention-grabbing till after dark. People were flowing in by the masses, taking seats and mingling. It was... nice. Even Technoblade looked to be enjoying himself, talking off to the side with Niki.**

**Tommy and Wilbur were perched precariously on the ledge of a taller tower, staring down at everyone. Tommy was dressed head to toe in netherite while Wilbur stood unarmed, trench coat draped across his frame.**

**“This is it, Tommy,” he giggled, “it’s finally time!”**

“He didn’t actually set up the TNT... right?” George paled.

“Yeah...” Tubbo muttered, “he did.”

**“Wilbur *please*, ” Tommy begged, eyes wide and pleading, “don’t do this.” He looked down below, watching the people. He frowned, chest growing tight. “This is our home. You don’t have to do this.”**

**“It’s too late now.” Wilbur chuckled, shaking his head. He went to turn but felt a slight tugging on his sleeve. Tommy had a firm grip on his coat, eyes grim.**

**“We’re not the villains.” The blond said point-blank.**

***“We are the villains!”*** Wilbur shouted, eyes going wide. ***“Look how nice this is, Tommy! Look how happy they are! We’re the villains in this story!”***

Tommy felt his heart lurch, scanning the crowd and seeing friends and family. He didn’t want to do this. He so badly didn’t want to do this. His gaze fell on Tubbo and he couldn’t help but let out a low whine, as though he was pained.

***I don’t want to do this...*** He thought quietly, but was quickly brought back to reality by a hand on his shoulder.

***“If you wanted to stop me,”*** Wilbur began, ***“if you *really* didn’t want me to do this, you would have done something by now. You want this Tommy, don’t deny it.”***

Tommy shuddered, taking in a large gulp of air. He opened his mouth to deny, to reply that what his brother had just said simply wasn’t true in the slightest, but no words came. Wilbur gave his shoulder a squeeze, smiling.

***“Let’s get going,”*** he declared, turning on his heel, ***“the festival’s about to begin.”***

Tommy stood watching, pale as a ghost.

***“And he’s bloody right ain’t he?”*** Jack muttered bitterly. ***“If he didn’t wanna do it so badly why wouldn’t he have tried to stop him?”***

***“He had many opportunities, to be fair.”*** Techno pointed out.

***“And h-”***

***“All of you be quiet.”*** Puffy whispered, though it rang throughout the room, silencing everyone instantly. Her head was bowed, shoulders shaking. ***“Are you all batshit fucking stupid?”*** She hissed.

“Are you just falling for Wilbur’s manipulation? Is that what this is?” She laughed incredulously, “You can’t be serious! Tommy doesn’t want to do it, he said he doesn’t want to, i-it’s *obvious* he doesn’t want to! But he’s too scared of going against Wilbur!”

Everyone was completely quiet.

“He promised Wilbur he’d never leave him.” She said quietly, “And unlike some people here Tommy tries to stay true to his words.”.

Still, no one spoke. Specifically, the three who had been most critical of Tommy had yet to reply.

“Whatever,” Puffy shook her head, smiling bitterly, “let’s just keep watching...”

## Chapter End Notes

HOPE U GUYS LIKED IT!!! big plans for next chapter lol...

also quick disclaimer i want to say i actually LOVE c!wilbur and think he's a very good villain and also not inherently evil! he's really cool n i care him. ALSO!!! like ive previously mentioned i love c!niki and c!jack and like. i know how much you guys love to go like "arrhgggg!! why are they being like this!!! i hate them!!!!" but they're not gonna change in two seconds unfortunately T-T try and keep ur minds open to the fact that they have their own traumas and issues that arent being displayed on the screen and that their realizations and changes will be drawn out! they're being dicks Sometimes but everyone has their reasons

anyways thanks for reading love u guys!!!

~47bats



# Conformity

## Chapter Summary

the festival + pit ...

TRIGGER WARNINGS: heavy blood, death & manipulation

In all honesty, Quackity wasn't faring well.

He'd always considered Tommy a close friend, and the blond had been one of the first people he actually acquainted himself with on the server. Where oftentimes they were seen as 'too much' by others, together they fit in well with one another. Tommy had always fit in with him, there'd never been an awkward or uncomfortable moment between them, even when on opposing sides, which made him rather fond of the kid.

His heart ached as he thought back to how genuinely excited Tommy had been for him when he'd heard that SWAG2020 was doing well. Tommy had never wished ill will on him.

The issue was that he had originally thought that of Wilbur. Quackity had thought of Wilbur as one of his closest friends, and respected him beyond words. They'd grown close, especially during the final days of Pogtopia, and it made him sick to realize what had really been going on with the man. He'd known Wilbur was sick, sure, but he'd never even stopped to think of how that might've affected the little kid who always stuck to his side. Even when running ahead of the crowd, Tommy was still following behind Wilbur. Tommy was always beside the man.

Contrary to so many people in the room, he'd never had anything against Tommy. He'd always loved the kid. They never fought, never truly argued, they were *friends*. Of course, there were times when he'd sit back and think to himself that, sure, the kid needed some discipline in his life, maybe some consequences for his actions, but he'd never openly hated him like so many people he knew.

Quackity could understand the sacrifice that Tommy had made for L'Manberg. He understood that Tommy had lost *two* lives for the country, and would protect it with his last. It didn't make him go any easier on the kid during the elections, but he had respect for him, which was a lot more than most could say.

Watching someone who he'd considered a close friend manipulate and abuse Tommy, well, it felt like shit. He couldn't get the image of Tommy crying in the closet out of his mind no matter how hard he tried. He couldn't imagine having someone wrapping him around their finger like that...

From what he'd heard through the grapevine, many people had extremely valid grievances with Tommy, but for some reason he couldn't bring himself to think of him as anything other than a friend, and a trustworthy one at that.

Did it really matter if he had a rude demeanor or a tendency to steal? All Quackity cared about was the fact that he *knew* in a life or death situation Tommy would have his back. Other people stole, other people were assholes (though less occasionally than Tommy), and it never seemed to come back to bite them quite as much as it did Tommy.

He had nothing to apologize to Tommy for, and yet he felt the need to say sorry. He wasn't even sure what for. Perhaps just a 'sorry you went through that man' would be enough, but it didn't *feel* like enough. He felt like he had to apologize on behalf of the others for fear of them never doing it themselves.

Sam had told him Tommy had been trying to move on. He didn't want the kid living with all that weighing him down when he had *so much* more time left.

Quackity sighed, rubbing at his face. He just wanted to see Tommy. He just wanted to know if he was okay.

"You doing okay man?" Karl asked, smiling over at him. He offered a weak grin in response, tongue rubbing up on his gold tooth.

"Yeah," he nodded, straightening from his hunched position, "I'm good."

They relaxed into their seats, awaiting the next memory.

**There was the sound of screaming as ash rained down from the skies. The night's darkness was blanketed heavily over L'Manberg, and it almost felt as if the lanterns and streetlights weren't enough to combat the suffocating blackness.**

**People were running, some towards the podium, but most away, in horror. Blood was heavy in the air, along with the smell of burnt flesh. The loudest scream of all came from up on top of Eret's tower.**

***"Tubbo!"* Tommy shrieked, eyes wide with horror as tears streamed down his face. Wilbur had his elbow hooked around the youngest's collar, holding him back as he clawed at it tooth and nail.**

Tubbo paled drastically, taking a deep breath. Ranboo looked over, deeply confused and concerned.

***"Let's go Tommy!"* Wilbur growled, nudging him back, "we have to go!"**

***"No!"* The blond cried, a mess of tears. He scraped at Wilbur's arm for dear life, nails that had been bitten down trying their best to dig into skin as he screamed his best friend's name over and over, a constant mantra on his tongue.**

Quackity didn't... he didn't like the way Wilbur was trying to pull Tommy away. As if Tommy would go anywhere other than to Tubbo's side in that moment.

**Wilbur scowled at him for a moment, lip curling in disgust before abruptly letting go. The boy stumbled a couple steps before regaining his balance. Wilbur quickly ducked away, leaping down from the building and away into the distance. Tommy paid him no mind.**

“Fuck,” Quackity hissed, eyes going wide. “Tubbo don’t look!”

Tubbo had enough common sense to turn to his side, knees curled up to his chest and squeezing his eyes shut tight. He clamped his hands over his ears, humming quietly. Ranboo grew *much* more concerned.

**Tommy stared at the podium in shock, mouth agape. There was a yellow concrete box before the microphone. It was splattered with blood and gunpowder. Technoblade stood before it, firework launcher in hand. He too, was covered head to toe in blood.**

Ranboo’s heart stopped. Puffy stared, confused but horrified.

**“*Tubbo!*” Tommy howled again, fumbling for an ender pearl before clumsily sending it flying. Within seconds he was standing just feet from the bloody mess that used to be his best friend. The people down below were still in a panic, fleeing the scene and screaming for their lives.**

No... No.

Was Ranboo... was he supposed to believe that... that mess of guts and blood was his *husband*? He clamped a hand over his mouth, stifling a gag.

**“You,” He growled, turning on his heel to face his elder brother, “*you killed him!*” He unsheathed his blade, raising it high above his head and bringing it down on Technoblade. The latter parried the move, gritting his teeth as blood dripped from his brow. *Tubbo’s blood.***

“What...?” The enderman hybrid managed, voice wavering dangerously. He turned his head, scarily calm.

The room was dangerously silent, both with horror at what they’d just seen and for fear of Ranboo’s reaction.

For the first time in his life, Technoblade made eye contact with Ranboo, and he was immediately struck with both regret and terror.

“Look...” The anarchist began wearily, rubbing the back of his head nervously, “I...” He trailed off, staring down at the floor.

“No no,” Ranboo laughed, “by all means go on! Explain to me what the *hell* I just saw.” The tension in the room grew thicker, and the bystanders all looked ready to prevent any physical altercations. Purple particles swam about in the room, quietly whispering threats and curses.

Tubbo was still silent, hands covering his ears and eyes screwed shut, but he opened one just a slit, seeing his husband’s shoulders shaking.

“Things were complicated...” Techno tried, “I-It might be better for you to just, y’know. Keep watchin’.”

Ranboo took a shaky breath, jaw clenched. “It better be,” he whispered coldly, mismatching eyes staring dead into Techno’s soul, “for your sake.”

The Blade pursed his lips.

**Tommy raised his sword again before faltering, eyes going wide. He looked back at the box, heaving. He had to find Tubbo.**

**He leaped from the platform, feeling the jolt go through his entire body as he landed. The smell of gunpowder and burnt flesh was heavy in the air, and he had to do his best not to gag, wide eyes terrified as he scanned the area for his friend.**

**He bolted, weaving through the streets of L’Manberg, frantically looking. His heart hammered in his chest as he panted, sweat building on his brow. The streetlights were**

**dim, and his breath came out in puffs of smoke in the cold.**

**Finally, his eyes landed on a familiar head of brown hair and a suit. He whined quietly, stopping for just a moment before breaking into a sprint, nearly tackling Tubbo into a large hug from behind. The latter looked shocked for just a moment before recognizing the arms and turning around so he could fiercely return the embrace. Tommy was sobbing quietly.**

Ranboo's heart broke in two, and he looked to where Tubbo was still curled up. He could barely control his rage.

Phil was staring, dumbstruck.

**"Tommy," Tubbo gasped, grabbing onto the red and white tee desperately, knuckles white. He wasn't crying, but he looked to be in a daze.**

**"Tubbo," Tommy affirmed, holding on for dear life as he cried. He pulled back cupping Tubbo's face with his hands and nearly breaking back down into sobs. The older's face was heavily scarred, covering his left eye even. Tommy went to grab his hands and let out a small sob when he felt the rough scar tissue on them.**

**"Wilbur said he wasn't gonna hurt me." Tubbo whispered, breaths coming out in short gasps. Tommy gripped his hands tight, trying to hold himself together.**

And *oh* if that wasn't the icing on the fucking cake. Ranboo couldn't breathe, unsure of how to even hold himself in that moment.

"I don't- I don't get it..." Puffy murmured, eyes haunted, "What happened? What happened for you to- to *do that* to him?" She whispered, looking back at Technoblade.

"I was peer pressured."

There was a long drawn-out silence.

“Technoblade I *know* you didn’t use something as trivial as ‘peer pressure’, something *children* talk about in school, to justify the murder of Tubbo.” There was something primal in Ranboo’s voice, and despite the fact that he was shaking, he spoke each word with unabashed confidence.

“Well-”

“*What did you do to him!?*” Ranboo cried, chest heaving. He felt mere moments away from passing out. He couldn’t get the image of the blood-splattered concrete from his mind.

“I did what was best for Pogtopia.” Technoblade decided on finally, “I couldn’t risk the relations I had with Manberg.”

Ranboo eyed him up for a moment, *loathing* every second he had to stare at the man, before breaking into a bitter smile and shaking his head. “You’re pathetic.” He muttered, “And when we get out of here, I’ll beat you with my bare goddamn hands and hold you down so Tubbo can put a sword through your chest.”

Techno didn’t answer, staring at the boy with an unreadable expression on his face. To his right, Phil looked physically ill, though at what, Ranboo wasn’t sure.

**“I’ll fucking kill him.” The younger growled. They bowed their heads together, holding each other’s hands for just a moment as the war waged upon them. An arrow at their feet shot by an incoming swarm dragged them from their trance. Tommy locked eyes with Tubbo once more. “I’ll fucking kill him.” He repeated, eyes dangerously calm.**

**They bolted into the woods, disappearing into the shadows.**

Karl placed a gentle hand on Tubbo's shoulder, slightly startling the other.

"You can look now, I think." The time traveler smiled softly. Tubbo thanked him quietly.

The second Tubbo had unfurled himself, he was scooped into a large hug, Ranboo holding him close, the quiet sound of hissing going throughout the silent room as tears tracked down the enderman hybrid's face.

"I love you so much," Ranboo whispered shakily, not caring about their audience, "and I am *so* sorry."

Tubbo giggled wetly, pawing at his eyes to ensure not even a drop landed near his husband, before looking up and carefully dabbing the tears off Ranboo's cheeks. He said nothing, but as he ducked his head, thumping his horns softly against his husband's chest, Ranboo knew he was saying it back.

The people around them were quiet, trying not to intrude.

**"I'm on your side, Tommy!" Technoblade insisted, blood having been hastily wiped from his face. "I couldn't jeopardize my position within Manb-"**

**They stood in the confines of Pogtopia, Technoblade on one side of the small gap and Tommy and Tubbo on the other. Wilbur was sitting on the stairway above, watching with a smile as he swung his feet back and forth.**

**"You murdered Tubbo on the president's command!" Tommy snarled, holding his axe tight, "You're not on our side! You didn't mean to murder Schlatt but you *meant* to kill Tubbo." He had his other arm outstretched across Tubbo, as if at any moment Technoblade would lunge and try to take the shorter's final life.**

Phil was quiet, lips pursed and eyes contemplative.



**“To be fair-”**

**“There is no fair!” Tommy interjected, looking beyond furious, “There-”**

**He was cut off by a loud giggle. The peels of laughter rang throughout the stone crevice as Wilbur leaned back, clutching his stomach. He was gasping for breath as he laughed, as though he just couldn’t stop.**

**Tommy went silent, staring up at his brother.**

**“...What’s so funny?” Tubbo asked quietly, hair shadowing over his eyes. He sounded both angry and offended, but a little bit genuine. He was still a bit out of it.**

Puffy was going to fucking deck Wilbur. Dead or not, she’d kill him *again*. Her heart ached so badly for Tubbo.

**“It’s just,” Wilbur tried to compose himself, wiping a tear away as he grinned, “It’s just exactly as I predicted. That’s all.”**

**Tommy furrowed a brow, frowning deeply. “What does that-”**

**He was interrupted for a second time as Wilbur leaped from the stairs, letting out a small ‘hup!’. He straightened himself up, dusting himself off. He looked over at Tommy, and then to Technoblade, and grinned.**

**“Watch out Technoblade,” he cooed, “Tommy’s mad at youuu~.”**

Fundy made a disgusted face at the interaction. Why was Wilbur egging them on like that? It was fucking awful.

**Tommy inhaled sharply, clutching his axe tighter. Techno looked him up and down.**

**“Look at him!” Wilbur jeered, smiling excitedly, “Look in his eyes!”**

**“Why’d you kill him, Techno?” Tommy asked, trying to ignore the man. He felt his heart beating heavily in his chest.**

**“I was under peer pressure.” The piglin replied, not an ounce of emotion in his voice, “You have to understand.”**

**Tommy stared at him for a moment, face impassive, though somehow everyone in the room could tell he was thinking that Techno was the biggest fucking idiot he’d ever met. “You can’t just say that, Techno,” he shook his head, “what’s- what’s wrong with you?”**

**“A-fucking-men.” Puffy hissed, venom seeping into her words.**

**“A lot of things actually,” his older brother hummed nonchalantly. Tommy took an affronted step back, eyes widening at how *indifferent* the man was being. Tubbo watched silently, eyes wide and blank.**

**Ranboo had half the mind to turn around and start screaming again, but a silent squeeze of his hand from his husband had him looking into big pleading eyes.**

**“Please don’t.” Tubbo whispered, shaking his head.**

**“Technoblade you *killed* Tubbo!” Tommy cried, face creasing in pain. There was a lapse in the conversation where the eldest of them all just stared at him, and Tommy couldn’t tell what the fuck he was thinking.**

**“Well,” Wilbur gleamed, sidestepping back into the conversation, “I don’t know about *you* Tommy, but *I* forgive Technoblade.”**

*Shut up. Ranboo thought to himself. Shut up Shut up Shut up Shut up.*

**Tommy took a shuddering breath, trying to keep himself from screaming. He leveled the older twin with a grounding stare. “I want you to leave.” He said, scarily calm, “I want you to leave and never show your face here again.”**

**“You think you can destroy Manberg without my help, Tommy?” Technoblade smirked, crossing his arms.**

*“Even I think you’re being a fucking cock here.” Jack muttered. Tubbo was his friend. He may have hated Tommy but he harbored no ill will towards his best friend, in actuality he’d say he actually hoped for good things when it came to Tubbo.*

Needless to say, there wasn’t a single person happy with Technoblade in that room, perhaps not even the man himself.

**“Hey now, hey now,” Wilbur waved his hands in the air, commanding attention to himself, “Techno, Tommy, stop speaking over Tubbo. I wanna hear what he has to say.”**

**The boy in question was still standing still, just... there. Wilbur brought himself up close to him, whispering in his ear. “*I wanna see them fight... Tell Tommy how much you fucking hate Technoblade!*”**

Sapnap felt his skin heat up with the rage he was feeling, gritting his teeth.

**Tubbo was still in shock, words not registering properly in his mind. He nodded shakily. “Y-Yeah...”**

**As Techno and Tommy dissolved back into angry banter, going back and forth, Wilbur's eyes lit up.**

**"Gentlemen," He declared loudly, rubbing his hands together, "I have a proposition for you two."**

**The screen went dark.**

Tubbo suddenly went very pale. "Please tell me she isn't going to show it..." He muttered quietly. Many people looked at him, though, confused.

**Tommy stood in the corner of a large crudely dug-out stone pit. The walls were jagged and rough, but he'd grown used to that by then. Technoblade stood in the opposing corner, staring at him blankly. Both of them had abandoned their armor. Torches hung above, casting shadows on their faces.**

**He turned, meeting Tubbo's eyes. The younger seemed to finally have cleared his head, and was frowning anxiously.**

**"Are you okay?" Tommy asked nervously, eyes flicking over all the fresh scars. Tubbo pursed his lips, looking down at the younger.**

**"I think..." He paused, taking a deep breath, "I think I forgive Technoblade. You don't have to do this."**

"You're fucking joking." Fundy deadpanned. "Like you're actually fucking joking Tubbo."

"We were at *war*, Fundy," Tubbo frowned, "we didn't have the liberty to risk our men fighting each other, *especially* when we had so few." He smiled, "If I had to put aside personal grievances for the better of everyone, well, easy decision, yeah?"

Puffy went still, looking over. "...Fighting each other?"

Tubbo didn't reply.

**Tommy stared at him in complete shock. "Tu-"**

**"No no no," Tubbo shook his head, smiling softly, "think about it, Tommy." He pressed, crouching down near the ledge so they could talk almost face to face, "It was you three versus an entire nation-"**

**"Exactly!" Technoblade chimed in. Dick.**

"Every time you speak you dig yourself into a deeper fucking hole." Quackity growled quietly. "I get that you don't give a fuck that you killed him but you could at least try hiding it you ass."

Techno remained silent. It didn't really matter, did it? All that mattered was, well, by that point, Phil.

Phil was the only person he cared about anymore.

**"-and there was a lot of peer pressure, to be fair," Tubbo laughed nervously, "I don't think this needs to lead to fighting..."**

"Tubbo sometimes you need to be a bit more... self-preserving." Sam tried, smiling awkwardly.

The boy in question nodded, sighing, "I know..." He frowned.

Back during wars and his presidency, his ability to put everything behind him, to act with the intention of the group instead of himself as an individual, was an asset. Now, however, Tubbo lived with his husband and child, and didn't know how *not* to choose for the greater good instead of just... himself.

He'd been very adamant that the logical decision would always be the best one, that the decision that spared as many people would be the most efficient, but maybe it wasn't about efficiency or probabilities... maybe it was about *Him*.

**Tommy was at a loss for words. He stared at the scars on his friend's face, heard the fireworks going off in his head, he could still smell the blood. He swallowed thickly, as though he was going to be sick. "Tubbo he *murdered* you."**

**Tubbo smiled sadly, "I-"**

**"So you're saying they shouldn't fight in the pit?" Wilbur interjected, looking thoroughly upset. He was staring Tubbo down, eyes drilling holes into the boy. Tubbo frowned deeply.**

"He needs to shut the hell up." Karl mumbled. Niki frowned, but didn't say a word.

**"Fine," he relented, sighing as he did, "let them duel in the pit... I just- I'm not an advocate of violence! I think everyone should just... get along, y'know?"**

**Tommy looked over at Technoblade, clenching his fists.**

**"I mean, that's very mature of you Tubbo," Wilbur praised, "see unfortunately for you though, Tommy isn't as mature." He grinned, "that's why he'll never be president. He's too angry, like look- look at him!" He gestured to the blond in the pit, looking back at Tubbo with wide eyes, "Even after you've said you forgive Technoblade he's *still* gone into the pit to fight him!"**

And how fucking *grateful* Ranboo was for that.

Wilbur was painting it as a bad thing, but the enderman hybrid was doing nothing but silently praising the blond, thanking him over and over and over. He was eternally grateful that Tommy had been there to defend Tubbo.

**Tubbo said nothing, only watching, and Tommy let out a tired sigh. The pit felt significantly smaller in that moment.**

**“You sure you wanna do this?” Technoblade asked, taking a step forward.**

**Tommy looked back at Tubbo, eyes contemplative. The latter tilted his head, smiling at him.**

**“I think you should do whatever you think is right.” Tubbo told him. He nodded, closing his eyes. The image of the blood-splattered box was all he could see. He looked over at Tubbo, eyes trailing across the scars.**

**He said nothing, but moved into a fighting position. Technoblade sighed as Wilbur let out a gleeful laugh.**

**“Alright,” the former president hummed, “then it begins!”**

**“Fuuuuck...” Tubbo whispered, eyes wide.**

No one in the room liked the sound of that.

**Tommy surged forwards, sending the first blow. Technoblade blocked it with his forearm, yet when he went in for a punch the younger dodged it with ease. Tommy might’ve not had brute strength on his side, but he was fast, and he wasn’t going down without a fight.**

“Tommy’s... not bad at fighting?” George asked, perplexed.

“Almost like we were in a fucking war, Gogy.” Fundy snarked.

“We didn’t often use hand-to-hand combat but it doesn’t mean we didn’t train for it.” Tubbo scoffed.

**They continued on, Techno mostly blocking, Tommy mostly dodging, and both of them swinging. The two of them respectively managed to get a similar amount of blows in, though it was looking a bit worse for Tommy.**

Tubbo was subconsciously shrinking in on himself as time went on, and it made the others nervous.

Phil had gone completely rigid, still not uttering a word.

**It wasn’t until a sort of switch went off in Techno’s eyes that things went wrong. His reflexes seemed to heighten immediately, and suddenly a hit from Tommy he wouldn’t have noticed he saw dead on. He whirled around, slamming the younger to the ground and kicking him in the ribs.**

Though Phil didn’t speak, his heart sunk.

**Tommy let out a sharp gasp, winded on his back. Techno went to kick him again, and he just barely avoided it, rolling out of the way and jumping to his feet. His nose was broken, maybe in several places, and there was blood smeared all across his face and arms.**

**Tubbo was staring horrified on the sidelines while Wilbur could only laugh, looking ecstatic.**



It was fucking awful. Sickening. The whole room was completely silent, no one speaking a word but *knowing* Technoblade was right fucking there.

**Techno spat out a tooth, red eyes amused. Tommy was glaring harshly at him.**

**Unfortunately, the piglin hybrid got the best of him just moments later, slamming him up against the wall. Tommy couldn't escape his grasp, fighting and thrashing in vain.**

Karl let out a whimper, grabbing Sapnap's hand for reassurance before having to wrench it away at the sheer heat.

**Techno raised his fist,**

***"Stop!" Tommy cried out, giggling as he fell to the grass. He was holding a wooden sword, though it was quickly falling from his grasp as he squirmed around.***

"That's fucking cruel." Quackity hissed, though his hands were shaking. "J-Just putting a flashback in the middle like this."

***It was sunny on the farm, and the grass was long, needing to be cut. Birds chirped in the trees, and there was a slight breeze. Wilbur sat under a tree, reading quietly, though occasionally he'd lift his gaze to scoff and roll his eyes at his brothers.***

***Technoblade smirked down at his younger brother laying on the ground. "If you don't get up I might just have to stab you." He sang playfully.***

***Tommy jumped to his feet immediately, sword in hand. "Never!" He declared loudly, making four poorly aimed swings for the older. Technoblade huffed on a laugh.***

*“I’m gonna stab you first!” Tommy laughed, making more stabbing motions.*

*“Uh-huh,” Techno grinned, “Sure you are.”*

*The second his younger brother got distracted, however, he winced, touching a hand to his head. He frowned, clenching his jaw and quietly whispering for someone to shut up.*

*“I’m gonna get you!” Tommy giggled, advancing.*

*“Oh yeah?” The older gracefully dodged his six-year-old brother, causing Tommy to stumble and fall to the ground, exclaiming loudly. He laughed again, rolling around on the grass.*

*Suddenly, however, something shifted in Techno’s eyes. The smile slipped from his face, and he stared down at the younger boy, face void of any emotion. He let his wooden sword fall to the ground.*

Technoblade looked away.

*Tommy stopped playing around at the action, tilting his head and looking up at his brother.*

*“Techno?” He questioned, eyes wide and curious.*

*A couple of meters away, Wilbur lazily looked up from his book to see what nonsense his brothers were getting up to, only to promptly drop his book at what he saw.*

*Technoblade looked to be in a trance, not fully in control of his own movements as his hand slowly reached to unsheath the real sword at his hip. Tommy was staring up at him innocently.*

*“Dad?” Wilbur began wearily, getting to his feet.*

*Techno brandished the sword.*

Puffy put a hand to her mouth, eyes wide.

*“Dad!” Wilbur screamed, bolting for the house as quickly as he could. “Dad!”*

*Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill.*

*Blood. Blood. Blood. Blood.*

*“You’re being weird Technoblade,” Tommy wrinkled his nose, but instantly his eyes lit up when he saw the sword. “Ooh! Can I touch it?” He made little grabby motions towards the blade, grinning wide. Of course, he hadn’t a clue what was going on, his brother had never hurt him before. He had no reason not to trust him.*

Tubbo wanted to cry. Tommy was so *small* and it fucking hurt.

*Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill.*

*Blood. Blood. Blood. Blood.*

*Technoblade raised his sword, and swung it down.*

*The iron hit wood, jarring him from his trance. He reared back, blinking a couple of times, just enough to see Phil knelt on the ground, wing curled over Tommy protectively and holding out the wooden sword Techno had dropped.*

***“W-What...?” Technoblade tried to gather his bearings before staring down at the sword in his hands and paling dramatically. He dropped it with a gasp, as though it burned, tears pricking at his eyes. Wilbur was watching terrified from the kitchen window.***

Phil was still completely quiet, not even reacting.

***Phil placed down the practice sword, bringing the confused but unphased Tommy closer to his chest. He looked... sad.***

***“Tech...” He began, reaching out a tentative hand,***

***but before it could reach him, Technoblade had already gone running, retreating to the forest with tears in his eyes.***

**And he swung.**

**There was no Phil to protect Tommy that time, and his body went limp with the final blow, slack in Techno’s grasp. The piglin hybrid let him fall to the ground in a heap, heaving heavily.**

**“No!” Puffy shrieked, pressing her hands to her chest. Everyone was completely shocked, staring at the bloody mess of a teenager in horror.**

***“Tommy!” Tubbo cried out, trying to jump into the pit but being stopped by a firm hand on his shoulders.***

Tubbo cried quietly, heart twisting painfully in his chest at having to watch it all over again.

**“And we have our winner!” Wilbur declared loudly, grinning like a madman. He hopped down, walking over to the two. “Techno my man! How do you feel?”**

**“Like,” Techno gasped, wiping the sweat on his brow, “a million bucks.” He slumped, sitting down against the wall to catch his breath.**

“Not even a hybrid and he still gave you a run for your fucking money,” Fundy hissed, ears pressed back. He was seething quietly, but most were.

**“Excellent!” His twin cackled, “Just excellent!”**

Jack and Niki alike were pale, silently shaking.

**Tubbo’s landing in the pit caused a cloud of dust to rise as he rushed over to Tommy’s side, falling to his knees. There was blood *everywhere*, but thankfully his chest still rose and fell.**

**“What the hell is wrong with you!?” Tubbo screamed out, turning on his heel to glare at the victor.**

And that was it, wasn’t it? Tommy would fight for Tubbo and Tubbo would fight for Tommy. At the end of the day, the hardest things to forgive weren’t things that had hurt them, but things that had hurt the other. Where Tubbo wouldn’t stand up for himself, Tommy would, and where Tommy couldn’t stand up for himself, Tubbo would.

Tubbo sobbed quietly into his hands, trying desperately to stop but failing.

**“He wasn’t gonna give up till he was out.” Techno shrugged, still out of breath.**

**Tubbo felt tears welling in his eyes, whining quietly as he grabbed Tommy’s hand. He choked on a sob, staring at Tommy’s bloodied face.**

**“Fuck you.” He spat darkly. “Fuck both of you.”**

**The screen went dark.**

Everyone was completely silent. Unsure of what to say.

Wordlessly, Ranboo stood, and everyone watched nervously. “I...” He turned to face the back row, taking a deep breath and schooling himself. “am going to *fucking* kill you.”

Without much more warning, he lunged forwards, eyes glowing. With startled cries, Quackity, Karl, Sapnap, and George had to physically push him back, gritting their teeth at the strain.

Tubbo did nothing to stop it, only staring Technoblade down.

*“How could you do that!?”* Ranboo screamed out, thrashing in the other’s arms as they restrained him, *“How could you!?”*

Techno didn’t speak. His face was unreadable as always.

“I’ll kill you,” Ranboo whispered as the people around him pushed him back down into his seat. He was craning his neck to maintain eye contact. The particles were chanting quietly, begging for Technoblade’s blood. “I’ll kill you and if you *ever* put a hand on Tubbo or Tommy again I’ll kill you a second time. As many times as I have to until I never have to see your face again.” He spat, shaking with rage.

As the others finally managed to get Ranboo seated and calm, the room went quiet once again. The only thing being the sounds of labored breathing and tears.

Honestly? Techno couldn’t find it in him to be too upset. He truly believed he’d done the right thing killing Tubbo. It didn’t really matter what they felt because they weren’t family,

and they wouldn't ever be. All that mattered was family. Not some kid named Tubbo. The kid still had a life left *and* it was the most logical decision, which Tubbo himself had admitted. He understood their anger, but that didn't mean he shared in it or felt the guilt they wanted him to.

The pit, however...

Technoblade turned to his father, who was still completely mute. "Phil..." He reached out a hand.

"*Don't.*" Phil seethed, and in the pale dim light they were offered they could see tears streaming down his face. "Don't fucking touch me."

Techno didn't even look surprised, bringing his hand down quietly.

Phil sobbed quietly into his hands, cries ringing throughout the room.

"Dad-"

"I left them so that something like that would never happen," Phil whispered hollowly, "I- I spent *years* trying to- to help you and protect them and *none of it fucking mattered!*"

A few people in the room had started to put the pieces together, gathering tidbits and forming a small hypothesis of what had caused Phil to leave Wilbur and Tommy, and while others still were clueless, they all felt undeniably *sad* for the man in that moment.

"Wil's gone... and he hurt Tommy. *You* hurt Tommy and... and I *left* Tommy!" He gripped at his hair, sobbing, "I wasn't... I didn't..."

He buried his face in his hands again, crying loudly.

No one knew what to say.

And so nothing was said. They just sat and waited. Waited for the nightmare that was ruining them all inside and out to be over.



# Dandelion

## Chapter Summary

the end of the pogtopia saga + philza :)

Phil felt as though his whole world was crumbling around him.

And you know what? It probably was.

Being a single father of a pair of mischievous twins as well as... well... *Tommy*, he'd had to make a lot of difficult decisions. Ranging from being the bad guy for a day because 'No, Wilbur, you cannot *eat* sand', to fully turning tail and leaving two of his boys in the dust, it had never been easy. For a long while, however, he'd had the mentality that he'd done the best he ever could have, and that going back in time he wouldn't change a thing.

Now though? Now he would get down on his knees and grovel if it meant he could return to teenage Wilbur and hold him tight and promise to never leave again, if it meant he could scoop up his youngest in his arms and promise him he wouldn't let Wilbur ever lay a hand on him.

But Phil wasn't dumb, he wasn't an idiot, and he'd never spent his time wasted on what-ifs. He was practical and strategic if nothing else, and had always acted with the idea that he could fix anything he put his mind to. He was Philza fucking Minecraft, after all, renowned across servers as an immortal, revered for his level-headedness and perseverance, surely something as trivial as short-term relationships wouldn't send him spiralling.

It did, actually. After millennia of travelling across worlds, the one trapfall he'd failed to avoid was that of fickle morality. He wasn't a god, by any means no, and he'd had people important to him much much before the little family he knew at the moment, but it had never... affected him like it did now.

If he had parents, he'd forgotten them. He'd been wandering the plain of existence for so long that it was indeed possible that he was just as old as existence itself. The thought didn't bother him at all, however. He was quite content with his eternal life. He knew his children knew, and he knew soon enough the server would realize that, Hey! Philza Minecraft doesn't age!, but that was for another time. His boys had never had a problem with it, if anything they were comforted by it. A father that wouldn't up and die. A father that would outlive them was something they could openly put their faith in, because he'd be there until they died and long after.

He'd adopted stragglers he'd found on his journey many a time, but he'd never settled down in a little cabin with them like he had with Techno and Wilbur. The children he often took under his wing would leave the nest as soon as they were able, dying out of sight and out of mind, but as times changed, Phil noticed that these twins of his would be sticking close.

He'd watched some of his children die before, and god did it ever fucking *ache*, but somehow, despite being seemingly no different than every other mortal infant he'd encountered, Wilbur and Techno had wormed their way into his heart in a way he'd never felt before. That's how the farm had come to be, because he couldn't bear the idea of taking them on perilous journeys or putting them through the calamity that was never having a set home. He loved Wilbur and Techno so much and for the life of him he couldn't understand why they were different from the rest.

And then came along Tommy.

Loud, reckless, angry Tommy.

Found when he was barely old enough to crawl, he had latched onto Phil in a way no other had. The immortal man had absolutely *zero* experience with babies, and had actually had an acute distaste for the thing at first. Love at first sight would most likely be the last thing he would use to describe he and Tommy's relationship.

For the first few months he had the kid, mixed in with the late nights singing the baby back to sleep, and dealing with tantrums every other hour because by *god* was Tommy a sensitive and dramatic baby, Phil had been actively considering putting him back in the bassinet and leaving him in the woods where he found him. He would just tell the twins the kid's parents had come back for him or something. It wouldn't have been the first time he'd turned a blind

eye to mortals in peril, or left someone to struggle where he could have helped, but for some ungodly reason beyond him, he stuck it out.

For some obscure and unknown reason, he kept the kid, and he was grateful for it every day.

Where Wilbur and Techno had sneakily dug their way underneath the walls that guarded Phil's heart, Tommy had walked right up to them and started banging on them. And it had *not* worked at first. He had those walls for a reason, his heart was guarded for a reason, they were perfected over hundreds of years of watching everyone and everything die and be born again. So, yeah, Phil did not like Tommy at first, and then one day the kid took one swing at the gates and they had crumbled to ash in just one fell swoop.

And it was *disgusting*.

It was like a moment of revelation where he looked at Tommy and felt nothing and the next he was sick with the realization that he would lay upon his own blade if it meant keeping the kid safe. Tommy had never had the most cunning or out of the box methods, but he was persistent and resilient, and with pure spite and determination alone, he always achieved his goals.

So it had gone from Phil, Techno, Wilbur and some kid they found, to Phil, Techno, Wilbur and Tommy. *His* Tommy. He loved the child beyond what he'd ever thought was possible because Tommy was his boy and he was *perfect*.

And Phil had just stared at the beaten and bloody form of his *baby*.

Leaving Tommy and Wilbur behind had been the hardest thing he'd ever had to do, but the image of Techno raising his blade to the youngest would never leave his mind, and for the life of him he could *never* send one of his boys out into the world by himself.

He did what he thought was best for his family, packing up and taking the eldest with him in the hopes that *somehow*, they would be able to return and straight back to the happy family they were.

But real life doesn't give a single fuck about happy families. If anything it resents them.

They found nothing. No answers, no help, not a thing; And Techno's problem was growing worse by the day. His heart ached for his two at home but he'd committed to helping Techno and from what he'd heard Wilbur was handling it well.

But their trips grew longer, and Techno's issue grew even worse, and before they knew it they could barely remember what home looked like. Phil had cried himself to sleep one night when he'd come to the realization that he couldn't remember which side of his face Wilbur's birthmark was.

Still, he stuck it out, because he was convinced it was the best option. He was convinced that by sacrificing his happy little family he could at least keep his boys safe and well.

But he was fucking wrong.

He... He didn't want to blame Technoblade. He didn't. That was his son, and he'd *seen* when the switch went off in his head and he couldn't control his actions, but that should have been a clear motivator for Techno to *never* fight or spar or anything along those lines with anyone he didn't want to hurt. And he'd done exactly that.

And yeah, okay, Phil didn't have many close people in his life, sure, but even *he* could see what had been done to Tubbo was so unbelievably wrong. And for some reason Techno didn't seem to care at all. Was it his fault? Had he raised him wrong? Why didn't he *care*?

He shouldn't have executed Tubbo in the first place but he couldn't even apologize, and it'd gone far enough for him to beat his own baby brother to a pulp in some fucking pit because of it.

He would always, *always*, love his son, but at that moment he did not fucking like him. He was so disappointed, wanting to break down and cry.

He had always acted with the idea that he could fix anything he put his mind to, but he didn't know if he could fix what had happened between him and Tommy. He didn't know if there was ever a way to make up for leaving him, but more than anything he just wanted to see Tommy.

Even if Tommy never looked his way again, Phil just wanted his boy to be okay.

Ranboo squirmed in his seat quietly, piquing Phil's interest and drawing him outside of his thoughts. The enderman hybrid looked tired and weary, constantly rubbing at his cheeks which were no doubt still burning and raw. He had managed to calm down, but the rage was still there, hidden behind a smile that put them all off, even if his anger wasn't directed at them.

In another world, another time, where he hadn't just watched his youngest be brutalized, he might've gotten defensive on Techno's behalf at the threats being thrown his way, but at the moment all he had the energy or motivation to do was turn a blind eye.

His eldest had dug that hole and he could lay in it.

"Are you okay?" Ranboo whispered quietly to his husband. "You didn't see any of like, the earlier stuff, right?"

"No no," Tubbo shook his head, smiling tiredly, "I'm good don't worry.... I just... it's nothing. We'll talk later, kay?"

Ranboo nodded, frowning slightly, but respecting Tubbo's wishes and going back to the screen.

They prepared themselves for whatever it was they were going to see, or at least, they tried to.

**When Tommy awoke, it was to a massive headache. He groaned, throwing his hand to his brow only to hiss at the burning sensation. With much more effort than usual, he managed to peel his eyes open, wincing at the torchlight.**

**He sat up slowly, stopping to hold his side or massage his jaw. His left eye was almost completely swollen shut, and he could feel he was missing a tooth or two. His lip was split, and his head felt like it was on fucking fire.**

**He was in his room, and he had no idea how he'd gotten there- *Oh*. That was... awkward.**

**Tommy coughed quietly, holding his aching ribs tight. His wounds had been bandaged and the blood had been wiped from his face and hands. He frowned quietly.**

**“Ah,” A smooth voice declared from just outside of his room, “there’s our little loser.” Wilbur was holding a cup of tea, smiling tiredly as he stepped through the doorway. Tommy scowled darkly, cheeks turning red with embarrassment.**

Puffy glared at the older man on screen. Tommy had no reason to be embarrassed of all things about standing up for his friend, regardless of whether or not he'd lost.

**“Fuck off you fuckin prick,” Tommy hissed, still clutching his side.**

**“Relax,” Wilbur rolled his eyes, walking over and setting the tea down on the dresser a couple feet away from the bed, “I’m just teasing.”**

Sam scoffed. Sure, ‘just teasing’ your brother after goading him into fighting your older brother and cheering when he lost, not to mention standing idly by as he got seriously injured.

**Tommy didn’t answer, eyes flicking over to the exit. “Where’s Tubbo?” He demanded.**

**“Sleeping.” Wilbur replied absentmindedly, as though he could barely be bothered to pay attention, “been whining and griping at your side for *hours* so I made the little shit go take a nap.”**

That had been true, actually. Tubbo had been so adamant on not leaving Tommy’s side, hissing and spitting at Wilbur every time the man came near, that it was a wonder he’d been somehow convinced into taking a short break.

**Tommy couldn’t help but feel a little happy at that before instantly feeling guilty for feeling it in the first place. He shouldn’t be *glad* that Tubbo was worried about him, what the hell was wrong with him? He looked down at his lap, hands twisting up in the covers as he frowned. His messy hair fell over his head, casting a shadow over his eyes.**

**“Anyways,” Wilbur stretched out his arms, groaning tiredly as he did, “I didn’t come to talk about Tubbo.”**

***Then leave,* Tommy thought bitterly, reprimanding himself for it only seconds later, beyond relieved he hadn’t said it aloud.**

**Wilbur placed a firm hand on Tommy’s shoulder, face suddenly going very serious. The blond looked up at him, mouth drawn in a line.**

**“In just a few days time, it all goes down, Tommy.” Wilbur murmured quietly, eyes scanning the boy.**

Everyone knew exactly what he was talking about, and the tension in the room somehow managed to grow even thicker.

**“I know, Wil.” Tommy replied diligently.**

**“There’s going to be bloodshed,” the elder whispered, “are you ready to take another man’s life?”**

Tubbo furrowed his brow, confused. They hadn’t been planning on taking many lives, only one- his eyes widened, realization hitting him just before the anger did.

**Tommy’s brow furrowed, looking confused before it dawned on him. His lips parted in surprise. “...You want *me* to kill Schlatt?”**

**Wilbur grinned wide, nodding his head. “Yes exactly!” He cheered, “A bolt between his eyes!”**

Karl didn’t like that. Not one bit. Tommy was a *kid*. The last thing he needed was to be a *murderer*.

**The blond mulled it over a minute, swallowing thickly. “Why?”**

**“I’ve thought about what you said,” Wilbur admitted, “at the beginning of... this,” he gestured vaguely around them, “and you’re right. It *was* my fault for hosting the election.”**

**Tommy looked unnerved, taking a deep breath.**

**“So as much as I want to be the one to do it, and *god* do I want to do it,” the taller clenched his fists tight, “it wouldn’t be fair for the others. But *you*, Schlatt took everything from you, Tommy. He took it all when you invited him onto this server as an *ally*.” his grip on Tommy’s shoulder grew tighter, “he took your home, your friends, your *tubbo*. Even the image of your childhood hero, *The Blade!* He took that all from you, Tommy. You killing him would be poetic justice, wouldn’t it?”**

**Tommy looked down, simmering in his thoughts. Images of Tubbo’s execution, of Technoblade drenched in Tubbo’s blood, of the cramped walls of Pogtopia, of**



**everything that had happened within those walls, flashed in his mind.**

**Schlatt had taken Wilbur from him.**

**“You’re right,” Tommy hissed, looking up with fire in his eyes, “You’re right Wilbur.”**

Phil felt pained as he watched. Wilbur was trying to make a killer out of Tommy, and it seemed to be working.

**“That’s my man!” Wilbur cried excitedly, letting out a jovial laugh and clapping Tommy on the back. “To hell with Schlatt!”**

**“Yeah...” Tommy nodded, taking a deep breath, “to hell with Schlatt.”**

**“I’m proud of you, Tommy.” Wilbur smiled, making Tommy’s heart flutter, “in a couple of days it’ll all be ours again. Just me and you, against the world again.”**

Ranboo hated how happy Tommy looked at those five first words.

**Tommy nodded, frantically grasping for the image Wilbur had just painted in his mind. He could do it. He could kill Schlatt and he could get his big brother back. Once they got L’Manberg back Wilbur would go back to how he was. He could do it. He could.**

**He would kill Schlatt and get his brother back. L’Manberg would be theirs again. Tubbo would be okay, and they would continue their fight with Dream. In just a sleep or two he’d have his old life back.**

“Why the fuck was he trying to make Tommy kill Schlatt?” Quackity asked as the screen began to switch scenes.

“I don’t... I don’t really know.” Ranboo hummed, “But I know it wasn’t because of what he said. That was a lie.”

“Definitely.” Tubbo agreed.

They could at least all be happy with the fact that Tommy *hadn’t* killed Schlatt. Wilbur obviously couldn’t’ve predicted Schlatt’s heart attack right at that moment, so whatever plans he’d had with making Tommy a murderer had fallen through.

Niki let herself relax slightly. Things with Wilbur were coming to a close. She wouldn’t have to watch him do those *things* soon, and it would be a smooth ride from there on out.

**His ears were ringing.**

**Explosions went off in the back, making the ground he stood on shake. People dressed head to toe in netherite were running in all directions, brandishing their weapons and waving them around wildly. They all blended together by that point, there was only one actual enemy. The sides had blurred together in a desperate attempt to salvage what little they had. Screams echoed throughout the country and vaguely he could hear laughter as well.**

**His ears were ringing.**

**Across a large gap stood his father, weeping silently over a body. His wings were curled tightly, shoulders hiked up as he mourned, and hands covered in blood. There was a sword at his side, discarded. The body was completely still, blood seeping out from beneath it. The large coat was turning an ugly darker brown as the blood melted into the fabric.**

Phil had to look away, putting a hand to his mouth and swallowing back bile. It didn’t matter how many times that scene had replayed in his nightmares, it still hurt just as much every time. He would never be able to get over that day, and perhaps not ever able to even heal. Wilbur’s blood stained his hands no matter where he went. When he woke in the morning, when he went to bed at night. From dusk till dawn, the blood of his boy haunted him.

**Tommy's ears were ringing.**

Niki immediately seized back up, eyes going wide and her whole body tensing as she turned away. Even the idea of seeing Wilbur's body again was too much.

**His own sword fell to the ground, and just barely, he heard someone yell out his name. He fell to his knees, eyes wide as he stared. All he could hear was that high-pitched whine and the sound of his own breathing. He couldn't tear his eyes away from the sight.**

**Before he even registered it in his mind he was screaming, tears streaming down his face. He wailed out his brother's name, over and over and over and *over again*. When he stood to try and make his way over, arms wrapped tightly underneath and over his shoulders to hold him back. He kicked and howled and thrashed like he'd never done before, but still, they held on, whispering small apologies and reassurances in his ear.**

Ranboo's heart broke at the sight, and Puffy let out a low whine. Regardless of what Wilbur had done, Tommy had still loved him fiercely. He had loved Wilbur without hesitation, and it was no doubt like Phil had plunged the sword into *his* chest instead, having to watch his brother die. It was a horrible sight, really. Seeing the boy have to be physically restrained as he screamed out into the skies felt like its own stab to the gut.

**"I'm sorry Tommy." Quackity whispered hollowly, sobbing quietly as he held onto the boy for dear life. He couldn't let him see. Couldn't let him go off anywhere in such a fragile state when there were enemies running rampant. He wanted more than anything to go over with him, but he knew that the body would not move, and he knew that unless he got Tommy under control there would be more than one corpse. And so he held onto Tommy with everything he had, weeping and gritting his teeth until the boy finally went limp. Tubbo was far off in the distance, trying to reach them as quickly as possible.**

Quackity took a deep breath, trying to calm himself. Despite everything he had learned, it still hurt to watch Wilbur die, because the truth is that you can't just stop immediately caring for someone, no matter how horrible their actions. He had considered Wilbur one of his

dearest friends, and was still processing the reality of the situation. The admiration he'd held for the man wouldn't go away just because he wanted it to.

**With the blond finally under control, Quackity let him go, and he slumped to the ground, crying with his fists clenched at his side.**

**“Tommy.” Came a mournful voice, and the two standing on the ledge looked over to see Niki's shaking shoulders and red puffy eyes. “He's waiting for you.”**

A couple seemed to be perplexed at that, but many others knew exactly who Niki was talking about. The girl in question had shakily turned back to the screen, praying to god that she wouldn't have to see *him* again.

**Tommy nodded silently, standing almost robotically. He wiped at his face with his sleeve before stiffly making his way over across the open space.**

**Technoblade was standing tall, ready to spawn the Withers at any moment. He didn't... He didn't look sad like Tommy had thought he'd be, but maybe he'd known prior to then about Wilbur's death. Maybe he was internalizing it all. Whatever. It didn't matter.**

And he was right, partially. Technoblade had known Wilbur would blow it all up, but he hadn't had a clue about his father making an appearance and slaughtering the younger twin. When it had happened it had quite literally been an agonizing moment for him, as though he could *feel* his twin's last raspy breaths, but he quickly swallowed it down, knowing that there would be time to mourn later. Wilbur hadn't blown it to bits so that Techno could keel over and whine like an infant, he had to go through with their plan, even if Philza's arrival had been completely unanticipated.

**Tommy put on a brave face, gritting his teeth and summoning a sword. He tried to take another step forward but was quickly discouraged by his living older brother.**

**“Tommy,” Technoblade began, holding a skull in his hand, “do you think you're a hero? Is that what this is?”**

*Of course he does*, Jack thought bitterly to himself. Tommy had always considered himself the hero and everyone else some side characters in his big game. That's all the server was to him. A game about those stupid discs.

**The blond's breath shook, looking pained. The ruins of his country and the body of his brother behind him. "I just wanted... I just wanted L'Manberg. That's all I've ever wanted."**

Jack tried to shake off how genuine the boy sounded.

**The Blood God sighed, shaking his head. "You wanted power."**

Puffy wanted to scream. Had it *ever* seemed like Tommy was after power? There were only two things that boy wanted and it was a home and his discs. That wasn't power, that wasn't malicious in any sense.

**"I- I didn't..." Tommy paused, turning his head to look as people around them tended to the wounded, at the smoldering buildings and craters that used to be homes.**

**"Look the thing about this world, Tommy, is that good things don't happen to heroes," Technoblade said, throwing one of the skulls up and down as if it were some plaything, "Let me tell you a story Tommy, a story of a man called Theseus." he grinned.**

"You're a real fuckin snoozefest you know." Quackity muttered angrily.

*"Especially for someone called the Blood God."* Karl chimed in. George, Tubbo, and Sapnap all snickered quietly to themselves. Techno pursed his lips.

It was nice, pretending that the anarchist was less threatening than he was. It was nice to pretend the mood was lighter than it actually was.

Tommy shifted nervously, suddenly feeling very alone and very scared. He pushed back every memory, every thought, *everything* of Wilbur, because it was what the man would have wanted. His Wilbur would have wanted him to keep fighting.

“His city, was endangered,” his older brother’s eyes flicked over to the van that held Schlatt’s corpse, “and he sent himself forward into enemy lines. He slayed the minotaur and saved his city.” he took a long, drawn-out breath before leveling Tommy with a stare, “you know what they did to him, Tommy?”

“...What did they do?”

“They exiled him.”

“Jesus fuck that did not age well...” Fundy commented, eyes wide. The others looked just as perturbed.

“He died in disgrace, despised by his people. That’s what happens to heroes, Tommy.” Techno grinned, spreading his arms out wide, stepping back over to his setup, “But if you want to be a hero, Tommy, that’s fine.”

“Technoblade...” Tommy began, hands itching, “Don’t do this. We’re so close! I’m not the hero! *No one’s the hero!*”

“You want to be a hero, Tommy?” Techno cocked his head, red eyes glowing.

“Dude he *just* said no one’s the hero.” Sapnap said, gesturing at the screen.

“*Then die like one!*” He whirled around, placing the skulls as people surged forwards, but it was too late. Withers were born, taking to the skies.

**The screen went dark.**

Almost all of them knew exactly what went on from that point.

The room was quiet, the people taking in the speech Technoblade had given on Theseus.

“You told him to die.” Ranboo said simply, voice scarily in check. “You’re his older brother, his childhood hero, and you told him to *die*.”

“I meant not literally,” Techno spoke up for the first time in a while. His voice was gruff, and he sounded... different than before. “It was just the way the speech worked out.”

“Oh yeah, 'cause I also go ‘hey! die!’ and then spawn a bunch of *Withers* on people in a *totally* figurative way.” Fundy said sarcastically, rolling his eyes.

Technoblade didn’t reply, only looking over at his father who was pointedly avoiding all eye contact with him. He frowned.

“He never wanted power.” Puffy almost whispered, “He’s a *kid*, Technoblade. He didn’t want power, he wanted his home back.”

“Please he knew what we were doing!” Niki scoffed, “I didn’t see it back then but I see it now. Technoblade was right, y’know? Schlatt *was* lawfully elected and he may have not been a good president but we performed a hostile government takeover and expected everyone to just go along with it.”

“And why is that on Tommy?” Tubbo countered, glaring, “Why him specifically?”

Niki looked slightly taken aback. “I-It’s not! It’s just-”

“The person in charge of Pogtopia was Wilbur.” Sam butted in, “If Tommy’s to be held accountable for what went down that day, then by all means so are you.”

“Back off, will ya?” Jack hissed, “Niki’s nothing like Tommy! He-”

“Of course, he’s nothing like Niki, they’re completely different people.” Karl pointed out.

“Wh? No.” Jack shook his head, “I mean she’s not- she’s not selfish! She’s not irresponsible and she doesn’t take advantage of others or cause conflict at every other turn!”

“Oh fuck off!” Quackity yelled, “Tommy’s a dick sometimes but he isn’t some mastermind villain or something, Manifold. He’s a dumbass kid who fucks up a lot.”

“I’m so tired of that excuse!” Niki cried, “So many of us are only just years older than him and he gets off the hook just because he’s sixteen?”

“There’s a pretty big difference between sixteen and nineteen, just for the record.” Ranboo supplied, whether it was helpful or not was up to who you asked, “but Tommy doesn’t just get ‘off the hook’ because he’s the youngest.”

“Then why doesn’t he face consequences for his actions?” She hissed.

“Wh- What about exile!?” Fundy sputtered.

“Oh wow, a couple of months on an island retreat.” Jack huffed, crossing his arms, “It’s not like he’s committed serious crimes or anythi-” He was abruptly stopped as a hand gripped the back of his sweatshirt, hoisting him up and pinning him against the wall. Many people let out affronted cries.

Jack paled as he stared into Sam’s eyes. The terrifyingly tall man was just inches from his face, glaring menacingly.



“You have *no* idea what happened during Exile,” the warden growled, “so I suggest you keep comments like that to yourself.”

Instantly losing the confidence he’d had only moments prior, Jack nodded nervously, sweating bullets. He grinned shakily, putting up both hands as a sign of surrender. After a moment's silence, Sam let him go, and they quietly returned to their seats.

No one really knew whether or not to continue the conversation after that or... well whether to speak or not in general, so they just waited for the next memory.

**Tommy sat silently in his home. His first home on the server. He hadn’t been in so long and yet it felt as though nothing had changed. He still loved it despite all the time he’d spent away and how much he’d changed while being gone.**

**A lot of people liked to make fun of it, but to him, it was just fine. He liked it just the way it was.**

**It was dark outside, the moon shining in through the windows. Tommy’s face was half-shadowed over as he stared at the picture in his hand, expression unreadable. His armour had been stripped hastily by the door, but he hadn’t changed, still in the war-torn clothes he knew all too well.**

Tubbo frowned. Tommy looked so *sad*. I mean, it was a given that he would be, but after seeing what Wilbur had done to his best friend, Tubbo couldn’t find it in him to give a shit. If anything, he wanted Tommy to rejoice in the fact that he was free from the man. He had zero tolerance for those who hurt his family.

**The picture was of the day they’d gone to the river, back when L’Manberg was just starting up. Wilbur was standing tall and smiling brightly, Eret beside him. Tommy and Tubbo were beaming at the camera, pressed up close against one another, still stripped of their uniforms with their pants rolled up and their feet bare. Fundy was scowling, drenched, and flipping off the camera.**

“Where are those pearly whites?” Puffy teased the fox, trying to lighten the mood.

“I *will* bite you.” Fundy hissed.

**A tear fell silently onto the glossy cover.**

*Wilbur stood quietly at the end of the path, ways down from the cottage. The sun was setting, painting the world around them in an orange glow. The grass blew quietly in the wind, tickling at his ankles. He watched the horizon wordlessly as if waiting for something to appear over it.*

*He did this for a good ten minutes, eyes tired, before sighing, shoulders falling. He carded a hand through his hair, taking one last look before turning around. Tommy was standing dead still, watching him with wide eyes. He smiled sadly.*

*“Looks like it’s just us again tonight.” He informed the smaller one. His tone was heavy, and sounded as though he was holding back tears. Tommy merely beamed, as though it were a good thing. Wilbur cocked a brow at him.*

Phil wanted to cry once again because Wilbur had been waiting for *him*.

*“What?” He smirked, looking at the blond.*

*“I like it when it’s just us!” Tommy grinned, “it’s fun!”*

*Wilbur’s eyes widened a bit at that before he quickly covered it up. He walked closer to his younger brother, kneeling down.*

*“You really think so?” He asked quietly. Tommy nodded enthusiastically before handing him a bright yellow dandelion he’d plucked from the ground. Wilbur smiled, taking it happily.*

Ranboo's heart fucking *melted* at that, and it was somehow so reminiscent of the time he'd first given Tommy an allium. He tried to push back the pins pricking at his eyes. Tommy had been such a good kid. Such a *happy* kid.

***“Let’s go get washed up for dinner.” He managed, straightening back up. He reached out his free hand for Tommy to hold and the latter gripped it back. They began to walk back to their little home originally built for three, but only ever housing two, hand in hand.***

Puffy tried not to coo at the sight, but it was beyond endearing seeing little Tommy holding someone's hand. She wanted to scoop him up and take him far away, to keep any of... well what had already happened from happening.

***“Tommy,” Wilbur began quietly, and the younger looked up at him immediately, “would you still like it just us, even if it was... forever?”***

***Tommy’s eyes were shining in the sun’s glow, and he took a moment to think, making a little ‘hmmmm’ noise as he did, before grinning toothily back up at his big brother. “Yep! Even forever!”***

***Wilbur swallowed thickly, trying to push back tears. He didn’t say anything, only nodding and turning his head back to look ahead. Tommy leaned into Wilbur’s leg as the walked, humming quietly to himself.***

**When he'd gone to see Wilbur's body, he'd found a pressed dandelion, faded and frayed, in the left pocket of his brother's coat.**

Phil hastily wiped at the tears in his eyes, trying to keep them at bay and failing miserably. Wilbur had kept that little dandelion for so long. He'd kept it close to his heart and had never parted with it until he died.

**Tommy dissolved into sobs, curling in on himself and clutching the photo close to his chest. On his windowsill the dandelion sat, basking in the moon's glow. Outside the**

**house, the ruins of where Tommy had last felt loved smoldered in the soot-filled air.**

**The screen went dark.**

# **we could just run away from it all**

## Chapter Summary

rest in peace clingy duo. also exile arc my belovedloathed

TRIGGER WARNINGS; manipulation & abuse

## Chapter Notes

HEYYYYYY let's just pretend that was a totally planned intermission between pogtopia and exile... yeah :) definitely did not go through a slight slump....

sorry fr tho my spoons have been extra low lately which means they're basically forks at this point but ANYWAYS! back with an 8k word chapter so hopefully u guys forgive me T-T have fun and read the trigger warnings

~47bats

“I’m going back.”

Drista looked up, craning her neck over to where her friend stood on determined legs, his face hardened. She cocked a brow at him, though he couldn’t see through her mask. Sighing, she stood, dusting herself off.

“No, you’re not,” She shook her head, “you’ll do the thing again.”

“I won’t!” Tommy replied instantly, eyes wide, “I swear I won’t!”

She eyed him with an unimpressed stare. He looked even rougher around the edges than when she’d initially brought him in, and that was saying something. The bandages fastened around his right hand were beginning to loosen and it made her frown. His hood was down, showing off the white streak in his ashy blond hair. It was shorter than other bits, having been crudely snipped away, but it just kept growing back. There were large bags under his eyes,

and the eyes themselves were a dull grey. Both the scar across his nose and the one beneath his left eye stood out in the dim light. He was absolutely engulfed in Ranboo's deep red sweater, sleeves bunched up in his fists to avoid the stupid 'sweater paws' he loathed so badly. His laces were messily shoved into the sides of his battered shoes and his lip was bleeding where he'd been chewing on it.

"Why do you even want to go back?" She questioned, letting herself lift off into the air and hover a few feet above. She laid back, resting her head against nothing.

"Cause they're watching it without me," Tommy growled, glaring up at her, "I need to know what they're seeing. I need to know what they do and don't know. *And*, I'm not a fuckin pussy. I can take it."

"I dunno," Drista drawled, strands of hair falling out of place as she tilted her head, "you couldn't take it last I checked." She floated around, swooping up behind him. He scowled, turning on his heel.

"Yeah well, you were a fuckin dickhead for putting that shit in." He muttered, "And I've got it out of my system now, we're good to go."

"Is that really how humans work?" The goddess asked, doing a flip in the air before catching herself inches from the ground. Tommy was grimacing, clearly annoyed by her antics.

"Yes." He ground out, smiling weakly. He had to go back. He had to prove himself. And he had to *know*. If anyone bothered to stick around after what they saw, well, he wanted to know what they did and didn't know about him. It wouldn't be fucking fair for them to just watch his memories pan out without him even in the room.

"If I put you back in, I'm not taking you out," Drista hummed, looking over at him. The bitch was trying to intimidate him into staying.

"That is simply not true." He huffed, "All I have to do is go *Oh Drista! Oh, Drista! Meuh meuh meuhmeuh meuh!* and you'll come running, bitch." He crossed his arms. Drista stopped in her flight, shoulders hiking up as her feet met the ground wordlessly.

“Liar.” She mumbled grumpily, pouting behind her mask. Tommy laughed quietly, grinning at her.

“Just put me in, pussy.” He raised his brows at her, smiling. She glared.

---

Technoblade had never been... the most sensitive person.

Wilbur had always been the feeler of their duo. As an extraverted feeler, he was focused on maintaining relationships and was good with communication. He always looked at the bigger picture when it came to even the smallest actions, and was quick thinking. He was gentle and agreeable. He knew how to make others feel most comfortable.

Technoblade was none of those things. He was blunt and crude. He didn't give a damn about relationships or any bigger picture. All he needed was his family, and they understood that no matter how aloof he acted, he still loved them. Communication and expression, well, it was for losers. He didn't *need* to tell people he cared about them, because the fact that he stuck around should have been indication enough.

He didn't care for many, but he had cared for his brothers.

Wilbur had always been so understanding about the nightmares and gory pictures that haunted him, memories of his past lives combined into one fragile skull. Hundreds of people who had lived and died, all crammed inside his head, and he could remember it *all*. Sometimes, through the mix of reliving horrors they'd seen, or horrors they caused, he lost himself, and something sinister took over, but Wilbur had been accepting of it. He'd told Techno that it wasn't his fault, and that no one blamed him for the things out of his control. Tommy hadn't understood it in the slightest. Even at seventeen, Technoblade wasn't sure if his younger brother would be able to grasp what it meant to have the knowledge and trauma of hundreds in your mind at all times. Wilbur hadn't *actually* understood, but he seemed to have a better understanding than almost anyone could. Call it twintuition. Phil knew what it

was like to be burdened by centuries and centuries of baggage, and perhaps he really was the only one who could ever truly *get* Techno. All the piglin hybrid truly knew about his family was that no one, in any of his lives, had ever made him feel as normal as Tommy, Wilbur, and Phil had.

When he'd had to leave, had to pack up his things, it had been sad, even for him, but he quickly steeled himself, getting over it. Phil for some reason hadn't been able to do the same, and that puzzled Technoblade because in another life the man would have been able to move on from anything, including some dumb kids.

The point, however, was that Technoblade *did* care about Tommy. When he'd raised his blade that fateful day, he'd gone tearing into the woods because he was horrified at the thought of his father being even just a second too late. He was horrified at the thought of hurting his baby brother.

But maybe things change without one ever really realizing it. Sometimes people grow in awful ways, not seeing how they've strayed from their original path. For Technoblade had been young and afraid of harming a hair on Tommy's head, but when he was grown, that fear had left, and he'd done so much more than just hurting Tommy on the surface.

He'd never really pondered the pit. It didn't seem like all that big a deal. Tommy had *wanted* to fight. The number of times Techno had been pummeled into the ground in an arena wasn't many, but he knew it well. It was... essential for growth, wasn't it? He wouldn't've been half the fighter he was if he hadn't learnt in battle. Losing was the first step to winning, right?

Of course, he'd never really meant to go *that* far, but it was a given that it could have happened. The memory had been... a bit blurry. Losing control like he had always left him slightly disoriented, but watching from the third person he was vividly aware of how brutal he'd been, and it didn't feel as fine as it had.

He looked over at Phil who was pointedly ignoring him, frowning.

Everyone was mad at him. It wasn't that he *cared*, but Phil was mad at him too, and that was new. His father and him had fought, of course, but never had the elder been so *disappointed* in him, and it left a bitter taste on his tongue. The others could stay mad for



all he cared, but the thought of Phil not being proud of him, of Phil not being on his side, well, he'd never known that reality before.

They'd seemed unhappy with his actions in L'Manberg, as well, but to hell with that. His past selves had been oppressed by the regime enough times, repeatedly, for him to know no good ever came from a dictatorship or *any* form of ruling, really. It was for their own good. Even if he had to be the villain, to destroy the factions *before* they gave him a reason to, he would do it. Because power corrupts, and he'd seen it enough times over to know that was an absolute.

His methods were crude, they were unorthodox and painted him as a villain, but he'd go along with it. Even if Tommy spat and hissed at him like he was the antichrist, even if his twin fell to their own father's blade, it didn't matter because Phil agreed with him still. When Wilbur went mad and left him in the world of the living alone, when Tommy went against everything he stood for and tried to instate a new form of power, it didn't matter because Phil was with him.

But Phil wasn't with him anymore.

Techno sighed, running a calloused hand over his face. What was wrong with him? Tommy was *fine*. The pit hadn't been some big deal. The Withers hadn't been some big deal. It wasn't a big deal because pain adds character. Tommy was stronger because of it. Tommy was better because of it.

...Well, he was supposed to be. While it was admirable that he never backed down, that also meant that he never saw his actions for what they were. He never saw himself as the one in the wrong. Why couldn't he have just *listened* when Technoblade had told him power corrupts? Why couldn't he have just backed down?

It wasn't his fault. It was Tommy's.

"Tommy's coming back." Drista's voice came unexpectedly from overhead. The people in the room shared looks, most of them concerned or confused.

"I-Is he okay?" Phil stammered, looking up worriedly.

“I don’t think that’s a good idea.” Ranboo said quietly, frowning. There was a discontented noise from above.

“Look, he asked to come back. Basically forced my hand. So he’s coming back. Okay?” Drista sighed, and they could feel the atmosphere in the room change. There was no verbal reply, and she clicked her tongue.

In a flash of brilliant white light they were coming to loathe, Tommy appeared in the room, standing awkwardly. They looked him up and down, staring nervously. He was scowling at all of them.

“Tommy-”

“Any of you fucks try *any* of that mushy shit or bring up what happened and I will stab the shit out of you.” He growled, interrupting his father. Phil blanched, extended hand falling back to his lap.

“Good to have you back, boss man!” Tubbo chirped happily, as though nothing had happened. Tommy visibly relaxed at that, moving to sit down. He tried to ignore the stares he was getting, looking down. The stupid looks were painfully reminiscent of his revival. For some reason, no one ever looked at him like he was normal.

An awkward silence settled over the room, and the people shifted uncomfortably in their seats. Ranboo looked over at the blond beside him, heart aching but also feeling copious amounts of relief. It was more than reassuring to have a real, safe, and tangible Tommy beside him. It helped him remind himself what he was watching was in the past, and that there was nothing he could do to prevent it all.

The screen flickered to life.

**Tommy walked down the prime path, the sun shining down on his back. His hair had reverted back to its usual bouncy self, and his eyes, though tired and sad, looked a little**

**less worn down. His clothes were patched up and cleaned, and there was no more grime coating his face. Ranboo was beside him, following diligently. He had his hands clasped nervously, hunched over slightly. It was bright out, and the grass was a radiant green, flowers poking out from the soil.**

Niki felt herself relax into her seat. Things would be easier from that point on. Wilbur was dead and gone, and could no longer tarnish his own name. She could do it. All she had to do was watch Tommy get actual consequences for his actions for once.

A bit of the tension eased up in the room. Tommy looked healthier and happier. The following memories would be fine, right?

“There’s you!” Tubbo pointed excitedly, earning a smile from his husband.

“Ranboo time.” Fundy grinned. “What will he do.”

**“Are you sure this is a good idea?” Ranboo asked quietly, “I mean I’m new I don’t really know the rules but-”**

**“Ranboob.” Tommy stopped at once, causing the enderman hybrid to almost walk right into him, “Relax man.”**

Ranboo sighed into his hands as the people around him laughed.

Tommy swallowed thickly, knowing where things were headed. Maybe, no *definitely*, he should have listened to Ranboo. If he had just listened, things would have been fine. Why couldn’t he just be *normal*? Ranboo was charming and sweet and unfrontational. People loved him because he was good. He should have been more like Ranboo.

**Ranboo nodded, gripping his pickaxe tighter. “Okay.”**

**They walked in silence for a small bit, the taller trailing awkwardly behind, before they came onto the outskirts of the SMP. Before them was a little home in a hill, built from wood and mushrooms with lanterns and barrels decorating the outside. A small pond with a bridge overtop of it was just before the house. The two stopped, eyeing the home up and down.**

“You little shits...” Phil muttered.

George stared at his house, not sure how to feel.

Tubbo cracked his knuckles anxiously. They had reached a point where things had really started to go wrong. Tommy was silent beside Ranboo.

**“Alright boob boy!” Tommy grinned wide, a noticeable absence of his old braces, “let’s grief this bitch!”**

The people in the room groaned at the enthusiasm.

Tommy laughed loudly, looking back at everyone. “What?” He questioned, smiling, “It was funny!”

**“Okay.” Ranboo straightened out, nodding. They crossed the bridge, Tommy taking a moment to coo at the little fish in the pond. When they got inside, they began rifling through chests, scouring for hidden treasures like little raccoons.**

**“Look at this!” Tommy cried excitedly, pulling a hat out of the chest and putting it on. He stood, doing a little twirl, and Ranboo laughed. “I’m GeorgeNotFound!”**

**They continued on, pocketing certain things they found and leaving useless things where they found them, constantly pausing to crack jokes with each other and show off whatever they’d found.**

The air in the room shifted as they watched, many people not really understanding what they were seeing. The destruction of George's house had been an alleged malicious crime. They'd pictured it as something destructive and sinister.

The truth was that it looked like two kids goofing off.

A couple of people squirmed in their seats.

Ranboo smiled fondly at the screen, though he knew what came next. It didn't matter though, because just for a moment, he was going to allow himself to enjoy his first friendship on the server. They'd had fun together.

**“Okay okay!” Tommy dusted himself off, pocketing a few more goods, “now let's put signs everywhere!” He grinned.**

**“What should they say?” Ranboo asked, already fishing a few signs from his inventory.**

**“Just stupid shit like ‘you can't see’ or ‘you are dumb’.” Tommy snickered, moving to the side to start writing things down. Ranboo nodded, heading over to the other end of the tiny home.**

“Tommy I can *see*,” George stressed. “I'm not blind.”

“Okay well then explain color *blind*.” Tommy countered, “hmmmm?”

“Oh my god...” The elder put his head in his hands, making the blond laugh loudly.

“Bitch.”

**“That’s good! That’s good!” Tommy cried out, backing away proudly from their work. He looked over the signs on Ranboo’s side, laughing at some of them.**

Tubbo smiled to himself. He loved seeing the two get along. It had been rough, trying to get the two (Tommy) to be civil around each other. Ranboo obviously cared for the blond a lot, and was extremely patient with him. Even when Tommy was sending death threats and kicking and screaming there was still a fondness in the enderman’s gaze that Tubbo never understood.

**“Now for the final touch!” The blond waved his hand dramatically, placing down a block of netherack and lighting it up. Ranboo’s eyes went wide. “Pretty cool, huh? It can be a signature or some shit, y’know?”**

**Ranboo nodded, still staring at the flame. Tommy moved around placing more, smiling to himself. He turned his back to the house, looking down into the pond, and heard a small yelp from behind him.**

**“Uh... Tommy?”**

**Tommy turned around, glancing back at the house before paling. The fire had spread across the wood, setting the little home aflame in just seconds. Tommy’s eyes widened, smile dropping from his face.**

**“Shit!” He cursed, fishing a bucket from his inventory and filling it with water from the pond, “shit shit shit!” He raced over, pouring out the contents of the bucket over the fire before going back for more. Ranboo was trying to stomp out the smoldering grass in a panic.**

**When they finally put out the whole thing, they were standing breathlessly before the house. Tommy looked over at Ranboo.**

**“We tell no one of this.”**

**The screen went dark.**

Karl, Quackity, Tubbo, Fundy, and George all went very pale. They'd watched the two teens trying desperately to put out the fire with a dry taste in their mouths.

"...What?" Karl said finally, looking ill and garnering the attention of every room.

"The fire was an *accident*?" Fundy questioned, frowning deeply.

"No?" Tommy tilted his head, "You saw me put down the netherack I-"

"Burning George's house down." Tubbo interrupted, "that was an accident?"

"Well yeah," Ranboo said, puzzled, "we were robbing him not destroying his house."

"Oh my god..." George muttered, placing his head in his hands, "oh my *god*."

"I don't get what the big deal is." Sapnap's brow furrowed, "he still robbed you. Like, he still committed a crime."

"*Everyone* steals..." Quackity muttered, chest tight, "we thought he burnt the place to the ground on purpose...."

"Dream said it was." George began, goggles hiding most of his expression, "He- He said it was an act of *war*."

“It was two kids pulling a prank!” Puffy cried out, “Tommy knows war, he wouldn’t just do that!”

“Well to be fair if it was funny enough-”

“Not helping, Tommy.”

Tubbo turned his head, staring at both Ranboo and Tommy. Dream had been furious when he’d found out what the two had done, building the walls around their country without so much as even a simple ‘hello’. The man had always been rational and logical, so Tubbo had assumed whatever had upset him so severely had to have been major. He’d assumed that Dream was well within his rights to be that enraged.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” He asked, locking eyes with Tommy, “why didn’t you tell me it was an accident I- I was on your side, Tommy.” He paused, looking sad, “I would have fought for you.”

“We thought you knew-”

“I thought you *were* fighting for me,” Tommy hissed, interrupting Ranboo, “That was the plan, right? Say no to exile? Fight back against Dream?”

Instantly, his mouth snapped shut, as if his brain had just caught up, but he’d already said what was on his mind.

Tubbo stared silently, hurt in his eyes, as Tommy glared bitterly. How did the blond not get it? He’d tried *so hard* to give his friend the benefit of the doubt. He’d done everything he could while remaining unbiased. Did Tommy not understand how fucking hard it was leading a nation? Did he not get how much it hurt having to pick the majority over the person most important to him?



“You wouldn’t get it, Tommy. You don’t understand how difficult some decisions are to make.” Tubbo muttered, crossing his arms and looking down. “just like Wilbur said, right? You could never be president. You’re too immature.”

Tommy’s eyes widened, taken aback by the statement.

“Oh fuck you man!” he seethed, fists clenched and nails digging into his skin, “At least I didn’t gain that presidency through being everyone’s little bitch and yes-man!”

Tubbo sucked in a sharp breath, looking furious.

That was a lie. Tommy regretted it the second he said it. Tubbo was *anything* but a yes-man. He didn’t mean it.

“Oh yeah? Well, at least *I* wasn’t stupid enough to go and get myself exiled! You did that to yourself, Tommy! I was trying to help you!”

“But you still did it! You decided to exile me!”

*“You deserved it!”*

Silence fell over the room. Tubbo stared pointedly at his best friend, eyes narrowed. Tommy was ramrod straight, mouth a thin line as his shoulders shook with rage.

*“Fuck you.”* He whispered, voice uneven. Tubbo said nothing, looking away.

The other people in the room were quiet, unsure of how to proceed. Ranboo looked defeated, unsure of which person to turn to. There was nothing to say that could really.... fix what had just happened.

Tommy swallowed thickly, digging his nails into his palms. *Why did I say that? Why did I fucking say that? I didn't mean it. I didn't mean it, I didn't.* Why had he even said the first part? Tubbo was being a *friend* and he lashed out. He'd acted like exile was Tubbo's fault. It was his own. He did deserve it. That had been made clear enough times. He deserved it.

Tubbo grit his teeth, glaring at the floor. Tommy *knew* how much he fucking hated being called a yes-man. He hated it. He wasn't a fucking yes-man. Somehow just not being confrontational and being rational had made him out to be the pushover. He wasn't. He didn't like unnecessary conflict and so what if that made him quieter and more agreeable? It didn't mean he let anyone walk all over him for even a second. And Tommy knew that. So why would he fucking call him a yes-man? Of course, he didn't mean what he'd said about exile. They'd just gone over the fact that the fire had been an accident. But he wasn't a fucking yes-man and he was *no one's* lackey. So as much as he wanted to apologize, he stayed quiet. If he apologized first after Tommy had called him those things, well, it would be proving his point, wouldn't it?

The silence in the room was deafening, and soon the screen picked back up.

**"I'm bloody innocent you pricks!" Tommy cried, gripping iron bars before him, "let me out! I know my rights!"**

**They stood in the courthouse; Karl, Quackity, George, Ranboo, and Fundy to the side, and Tubbo near the podium. Tommy was locked in a little cage, angrily shaking it back and forth and spitting swears at them.**

**Tubbo looked especially annoyed, glaring at the boy in the cage. His knuckles were white as he gripped the wood foundation beneath him.**

**"Tommy." He started, "Shut up."**

**The blond stared at him for a moment, head tilted, before going back to rattling the bars and yelling. Tubbo's eye twitched, and it took everything within him not to scream. Why did no one ever fucking listen to him? He was the *president*.**

**“I didn’t do it! You have no proof! Let me go! Let me-”**

**“*Tommy!*” Tubbo cried out, “If you don’t stop speaking immediately I *will* end this hearing here and now, and you *will* be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.”**

The tension in the room grew tenfold as the two teens watched themselves fight on screen. Ranboo fidgeted nervously.

**Tommy stopped, eyeing his best friend up and down. Begrudgingly, he relented, backing away and muttering things quietly to himself. Tubbo rolled his eyes.**

**“Now George,” The president began, “you said there were multiple witness reports?”**

**“Yes,” George nodded, “Karl, Puffy, and Niki are willing to testify on my behalf.”**

**“*What!?*” Tommy cried, “I was with Niki! She’s lying!”**

Niki glared over at the blond, who unsurprisingly had nothing to say for himself.

**“But,” George stressed, “that wasn’t the only important thing of note.”**

**“Go on.”**

**Tommy looked puzzled, scanning the room.**

**“All three witnesses can attest to Ranboo being at the crime scene as well.” George declared, and all eyes turned to the sheepish enderman hybrid. Tubbo’s eyes narrowed immediately as Tommy went stark white. Ranboo locked eyes with the blond, looking terrified.**

**“Is that so?” Tubbo grinned, “well then... Fundy, Q, please place our newcomer into a holding cell.”**

It felt extremely weird; seeing Ranboo look to Tommy for help and to not see Tubbo and Ranboo as, well, *Tubbo and Ranboo*. It was too difficult to imagine them as anything but.

**Tommy’s eyes widened as he watched the two members of the cabinet approach his friend. His grip on the bars tightened, heart beginning to race. It was Ranboo’s first day on the server for fuck’s sake. He didn’t deserve this.**

**He watched as they corralled the taller boy into a cell, locking him up. Ranboo’s tail flicked anxiously back and forth, and he was staring at Tommy, but not with anger. He just looked scared. The blond cursed silently to himself.**

**“Wait!” He cried out, “Stop!”**

**The people in the room paused, looking over at him. He gulped, sweating slightly with his fists clenched. The president raised a hand, signaling for silence.**

**“Ranboo wasn’t there...” He sighed, posture slouching.**

**“And you know this how?” Tubbo questioned, brow raised.**

**Tommy grit his teeth, nails digging into his palms as he looked down at the ground.**

**“I was there.” He admitted quietly, “It was just me. Ranboo had nothing to do with it.”**

Many people looked taken aback at the scene on screen, sharing confused glances.

“I didn’t know you took the blame.” Phil commented softly, staring at his son.

“Well I’m quite heroic, not that any of you assholes would know,” Tommy rolled his eyes, “you can just call me SelflessInnit if you’d like.” He grinned.

A couple of people rolled their eyes, already moving on from the selfless act due to the fact that they weren’t very fond of the one who was behind it. If anyone else had taken the fall like that they’d probably get a medal or some shit. But not Tommy.

**Tubbo grinned, though the concern in his eyes was evident, he tried his best to cover it up. He clapped his hands together.**

**“Well, then gentlemen!” He declared, “I think we have our culprit.”**

**The screen went dark.**

Tommy looked over at Tubbo. The boy was sourly avoiding his gaze, eyes trained on the ground.

“Tubbo-”

“If Tommy wants to say something he can say it himself, Boo.” Tubbo interrupted.

“I don’t have anything to say.” Tommy said through gritted teeth, “Not to you at least.”

“Good.”

“Good!”

“Go-”

“Shut up!” Jack hissed, glaring at the two. They went quiet, both stewing angrily inside their own heads.

Ranboo frowned, gaze flicking back and forth between his friends. Neither of them looked very keen on being the bigger person. Tommy and Tubbo were *both* so stupidly stubborn that Ranboo didn’t know what to do about it. He looked back to the screen, hands clasped nervously in his lap.

**It was pouring. A small boat made its way through the large body of water, braving the storm.**

**Tommy was absolutely drenched in the little boat, knees drawn up to his chest. His shoulders were hiked up, whole body tensed as his hair stuck to his brow. Dream was adjacent to him, rowing quietly. The rain didn’t seem to bother him in the slightest. Behind them, Ghostbur flew above the water, an umbrella held tightly over his head.**

Tommy instantly went still at the sight of Dream, mouth going dry. He pursed his lips, taking a deep breath.

**“I hate you.” Tommy muttered quietly, picking at the flaking paint on the edge of the boat. His nails were raw and bloody, chewed past the beds. Dream only laughed, continuing to row.**

**“You don’t hate me, Tommy.” He said, grin evident in his tone. Tommy didn’t need the man to take off his mask to know he was rolling his eyes.**

**They continued on in silence, save for Ghostbur’s happy and oblivious humming. Tommy would periodically look back at the ghost with a sad, longing stare, before going**

**back to picking at paint.**

***I miss Wilbur,*** he thought quietly to himself.

Phil frowned, heart clenching.

**“Ooh!” Ghostbur cried excitedly, looking off not too far into the distance, “I like it over there! Can we go that way?”**

**The two in the boat craned their necks to look at where the spacey ghost was pointing.**

**“That beach?” Dream questioned, “I don’t see why not.” He shrugged, “We’re far enough.”**

**Tommy glared at him from underneath his sopping-wet bangs, seething. They began to make their way over to the sandy shore, and the blond began to anxiously peel the paint back much quicker than he had been. Dream didn’t comment on it.**

**“This is pretty morbid.” Fundy commented, “Doesn’t feel very PG... y’know?”**

**“Yeah...” Puffy nodded, “there’s like... like this eerie vibe.”**

**Tommy stepped out of the boat, hissing at the cold shock of the ocean water that went up to his ankles. He immediately fled further onto the beach, waiting for Dream to anchor the boat. Ghostbur was floating around aimlessly, pointing out certain rocks he liked and speaking to the trees; asking them how their day had been and such. Tommy rolled his eyes.**

**“It seems nice.” Dream noted, looking around as he approached the younger boy. “We can set up your camp here, if you want.”**

Stupid fucking Dream. Tommy curled in tighter in himself. He hated how the man had made him feel like he had a choice. Like the location would have mattered when no matter where he chose, Dream would be there.

**“Whatever.” Tommy hissed. “I don’t care. Fuck you. I want to go home.” He was hugging himself tightly, shivering in the rain, teeth chattering. Dream threw back his head and laughed.**

**“Tommy you *can’t* go home!” He gestured around, “*This* is home now!”**

**The young boy paused, looking around. Ghostbur was happily going about in the dense forestry only a couple of feet away, most likely enjoying the extra protection from the rain. There wasn’t much, really. It was rather barren, and there was no one else around for miles.**

**“Sad.” Fundy commented.**

**“Fucking die.” Tommy flipped him off.**

**“Well, then I’d like it if you left my home.” He declared, leveling Dream with an unimpressed stare.**

**“No can do, Tommy,” The masked man shook his head, “I can’t just leave you like this. All defenseless and alone, y’know?”**

**Tommy looked repulsed, almost gagging. “I’m not fuckin defenseless! And I’ve got Ghostbur! I’m not alone!” He gestured in the vague direction of the ghost before plopping down onto the sand, “Besides, why do you even care?”**



**Dream sat down beside him, putting a tentative hand on his shoulder. “Because I’m your *friend*, Tommy. I care about you.”**

Puffy had to hold her tongue. Watching a man she’d never known hurt Tommy was one thing, but seeing her *duckling* as the culprit was an entirely new feeling. She’d long since accepted the fact that Dream was too far gone, but seeing it in person made shivers go up her spine.

*Get off Get off Get off Get off.* Tommy tried to shake the ghost of Dream’s hand from his shoulder, clenching his eyes shut tight.

**“This is your fault, Dream.” Tommy muttered, “you aren’t my friend, you’re the fuckin enemy.”**

**“Tommy, what are you talking about?” Dream questioned, laughing slightly in disbelief, “*You’re* the one that burnt down George’s house! *Tubbo’s* the one that exiled you! How is any of this my fault?”**

**“You fucking made him!” Tommy jumped up, a new vigor in his veins, “you twisted his fucking arm! H-He did what was best for L’Manberg!”**

**“Oh Tommy,” Dream cooed, voice dripping with disgustingly sweet pity, “do you really think that?”**

**Tommy stared into the blank eyes of the mask, faltering slightly before steeling himself over.**

**“I know it.” He hissed.**

**“Tommy,” Dream sighed, standing and brushing the sand off his pants, “They exiled you. I gave them the option not to. I gave them *multiple* chances to refuse!”**

Sapnap shifted uncomfortably. Dream didn't use that tone with actual friends.

**“You *made* Tubbo choose L'Manberg over me,” Tommy growled, “and now you want me to- to be mad at him for it like it was the wrong choice!”**

**“But it was, wasn't it?” Dream tilted his head.**

***Tubbo always makes the right decision,* Tommy thought to himself, fists clenched at his side. He glared at the older man before him.**

**“If Tubbo thinks this is what needs to happen, then this is what needs to happen.” He took a deep breath, trying to calm himself, “Now kindly fuck off.”**

Tubbo looked over at the blond, eyes wide. Did Tommy really think that? Was he that fucking dumb? Did he really think Tubbo was incapable of making a wrong decision?

Tommy was staring at the screen, avoiding the shorter boy's gaze.

**“Cute,” Dream tilted his head, “but no. Now c'mon, let's make you a shelter.” He didn't wait for confirmation, pulling out a stack of oak wood and moving over to the grassy area so that he could begin building. Tommy sputtered, chasing after him in disbelief.**

**“Cut it out!” The blond cried, doing circles around the man as he built a tiny home, “Stop that! Stop building!”**

**After just a few minutes, a small shelter was built, and Dream was standing proudly, staring at it. Tommy had his arms crossed, scowling and glaring daggers at the thing.**

**“Cool, you did your charity work.” The blond rolled his eyes, “now leave.”**

**“Juuuust one last thing.” Dream huffed, pulling out a shovel and digging a small hole in the ground. Tommy watched, perplexed.**

Tommy paled, hands flying to his head as he pulled on his hair in an attempt to ground himself. Ranboo turned, concerned. He reached out to comfort the boy, but as they locked eyes he could clearly see Tommy’s entire face screaming *stay away*. He backed down, glancing over every half second, eyes worried.

The blond was quiet in his panic, and not many others noticed.

“What the hell is he doing?” Quackity asked, staring at the screen confusedly.

**Dream straightened out, putting the shovel back in his inventory. His blank stare of a mask smiled at Tommy.**

**“Put your things in the hole.” He grinned.**

“...What?”

They’d heard that before. Almost all of them had heard that before. During the final disc war. Tommy had dug a hole in the ground and said those exact words.

**“What?” Tommy backed away, putting his hands up in defense, “I’m not giving you shit bitch!”**

**“Tommy.” Dream stressed, and he sounded much more serious. “Now.”**

The words suddenly held so much more meaning, and everyone around felt shocked at what they were seeing.

**“No!” Tommy cried, “What is wrong with you? I-” He blanched, eyes widening as Dream wordlessly unsheathed his sword. His words came to an abrupt stop as he stared. “You wouldn’t.” He growled.**

**Dream stood silently, sword in hand, as if he was asking Tommy to call his bluff. They stared at each other in a silent standoff, neither of them moving.**

Phil stared in horror, not understanding what he was seeing on the screen. Dream was *threatening* Tommy’s last life.

**After what felt like hours, Dream moved to put the sword back, and Tommy’s body practically melted with relief.**

**“You’re right...” Dream sighed, “I wouldn’t use the sword on you.”**

**Without another word, Tommy’s head snapped to the side, and he was sent stumbling back. Dream stood, hand outstretched as the smaller boy clutched his cheek with wide eyes.**

Many people in the room recoiled, and Puffy let out a sharp gasp.

Tommy didn't say a word. He'd gone through it already. They'd seen Wilbur hit him. It was *fine*. Even if his nails were digging into his skin and he was biting down so hard on his tongue he tasted blood it was *fine*. He told Drista he wouldn't freak out again. He pushed it all down, swallowing thickly and trying to breathe.

**“Put your things in the hole Tommy.” He ordered. “Right now.”**

**Tommy swallowed thickly, looking at the ground, and Dream raised his hand once more. Instantly, the boy began to empty his inventory, throwing everything down into the hole. Dream’s hand fell back to his side slowly.**

Tubbo's knuckles were white as he clenched the seat beneath him, breathing labored. *What the fuck What the fuck What the fuck*

**Without a word, Dream dropped TNT down the hole, throwing a lit match down seconds later. Tommy scrambled to get away as it detonated, staring in horror. The man in full netherite didn't flinch, staring down.**

**The silence was deafening, and Tommy could only stare in shock.**

**"I guess we're done here then!" Dream clapped excitedly, turning around and heading towards the boat, "I'll be back tomorrow Tommy!" He cheered happily, "Bye-bye!"**

**Tommy didn't move from his spot, still watching the hole, even after Dream and his boat had disappeared from his sight completely. He was left sitting in the rain, soaked to the bone and freezing cold.**

Nobody moved, all rooted in shock. Even Jack and Niki were pale. The only people in the room who didn't look absolutely appalled were Sam, Techno, and Tommy himself.

"...He hit you?" George whispered, voice hollow. Tommy turned, confused.

"I-"

"He *hit* you..." The man in goggles gasped, letting out a pained laugh. Beside him, Karl and Sapnap were silently stewing in rage, and the room had heated up considerably.

"It's fine I-"

"Tommy it's *not* fine! He hurt you! He-"

“George-”

“Look at what he did!” George gestured to the screen frantically, “He-”

*“He was my friend!”* Tommy interrupted, silencing the older man immediately. He had his fists clenched at his side. “Dream was my friend.”

“Tommy...” Sapnap began quietly, eyes sad. Tommy looked over at him angrily.

“Save it.” The younger snapped, “I don’t want to fucking talk about this.” He turned back around, staring at the screen.

“Tommy-”

“I said we aren’t fucking talking about it!” The blond cried angrily, glaring back.

Everyone was quiet. It seemed being speechless was synonymous with what they were going through. Every other memory left them reeling, and they had no idea how to act on it.

So they just stayed quiet.

**“Oh hello there Tommy!” Ghostbur greeted cheerfully, floating over, completely oblivious of what had just happened, “You look rather soaked,” he tutted, “would you like to share my umbrella with me?”**

**Tommy swallowed thickly, taking a deep breath. He forced himself up, gritting his teeth with determination.**

**“No thanks.” He muttered quietly, walking off into the distance. Ghostbur’s smile dropped.**

**“Where are you going?” The ghost cried out, following after him. Tommy sighed, his shoes making gross squelching noises as they soaked up more water.**

**“Dream took my things, Ghostbur.” He said, barely sparing the other a glance, “I need to go mining.”**

**“Oh! Okay!” Ghostbur nodded enthusiastically, “I’ll tag along then!”**

**Tommy didn’t say anything, only continuing on his trek. Ghostbur was happily humming beside him, pointing out the worms in the soil so that Tommy could avoid stepping on them and recounting what he’d done that day.**

“He’s such a weird little creature.” Karl hummed, smiling. His eyes were red-rimmed and his nose was rosy, but he was still trying to keep things less awkward.

“That’s the ghost of my dead son. Not a cat.” Phil deadpanned.

Tommy burst into laughter, clutching at his stomach. Many others seemed to find it somewhat amusing.

“He’s like a little pet rock.” Karl nodded happily, “his head is so empty.”

Phil sighed, putting his head in his hands and Technoblade smirked.

If there was one thing Tommy was thankful for, it was Karl fucking Jacobs. The man was a godsend. Just moments prior the whole room had been near tears and on edge, but Karl was good at chiming in at the right time. He was good at easing the mood. Tommy smiled to himself, making a note to thank the man once they finally escaped the wretched room.

Ghostbur continued to babble on about nothing and everything as Tommy mined. He told the blond about the family of ducks he'd made friends with, about how Quackity had told him that it was good for your eyes to stare at the sun, and how Niki had baked him some cakes. Tommy listened absentmindedly, making sure to hum along every now and then to assure the ghost he was paying attention.

"Quackity, *why* would you do that?" Sam questioned, looking tired. The duck hybrid erupted into laughter, not giving an answer.

"-nd then Tubbo was like 'oh but it'll be fun!' and I was like well okay if you say so!"

Tommy paused in his mining, looking back at the ghost who was still going on and on. He frowned, wiping at the sweat on his brow before going back to hacking away.

"-yways so *I* said he shouldn't do it, but *he* said- Oh! Hello there Technoblade!"

Tommy froze, mid-swing, eyes going wide. Slowly, he lowered his pickaxe, and at an even slower pace, he turned around quietly. Meeting the eyes of none other than his oldest brother and someone he fucking hated.

"Oh fuck no." Tommy growled, swiveling back around, "not to-fucking-day!"

"Tommy." Technoblade began.

"I can't hear you!" The blond cried back, mining away, "I'm mining!"

"Tommy turn around." The piglin hybrid ordered, and despite what Tommy liked to think of as his iron will, he did just that. He stared up at the much bigger man, arms crossed and scowling. Technoblade merely raised an unimpressed brow at him.



**“You look terrible.” The elder commented.**

**Tommy made a face of disgust before turning back around, going deeper into the cave. For some reason, his eldest brother followed him.**

**“I told you this would happen, Tommy.” The pink-haired man declared. Tommy grit his teeth, digging harder into the iron ore as he swung.**

**“Okay you got your little jab at me,” He panted, “and you got your ‘I told you so’. You can leave now, Technoblade.”**

“You’re such an ass.” Puffy muttered, eyes trained on the screen but tone bitter. Technoblade didn’t say anything back. Quite frankly, the lady scared him. And he was already on her bad side.

**“Government corrupts Tommy!” Techno cried out, “look at what it did to you and Tubbo! Look at what it made Tubbo do to *you*.”**

**Tommy froze, the sound of water dripping and bugs crawling echoing throughout the cave as he went silent. He swallowed down something vile, trying to school himself.**

**“Leave.” He ordered, “*Now*.”**

Tubbo couldn’t help the dread that pooled in his stomach at the way Tommy reacted every time he was brought up. He was so.... sensitive about it.

**“Or what? You’ll fight me? *Kill me*, maybe?” The elder tilted his head, amused, “I have full netherite and you don’t even have iron, Tommy. Face it! You’ve been reduced to nothing by everything you fought for! All your sacrifices were for nothing!”**

**“Dude shut up,” Quackity stressed, glaring back, “Does it like, make you feel good talking down to people?”**

**“Yeah pretty much.” Technoblade shrugged.**

**Tommy said nothing, grip tightening around his pick. He gritted his teeth and swung again as his older brother watched, not giving him the satisfaction of some outburst.**

**“So answer me this then,” Techno began, leaning against the wall, “here you are, not a dollar to your name. You’ve just been stripped of everything by the people you hold dear. Why this? Why are you still trying? Why are you out here collecting iron armour?”**

**“Because,” Tommy answered through a short breath, swinging down at the iron ore again, “no matter how many times I get knocked down,” he swung down again, “I always get back up, Technoblade.” The ore shattered, and he wiped once again at the sweat trailing down his face.**

**Techno said nothing, merely looking him up and down before turning on his heel and leaving the cave. Tommy scrunched up his nose.**

**“Fuckin weirdo he is, isn’t he?” He asked, watching the elder man disappear from his sight.**

**“Well, I personally am quite fond of Technoblade.” Ghostbur hummed. Tommy gave him an unimpressed look.**

**“He’d be the only one.” Quackity muttered.**

**“Right here, Quackity.” Techno commented.**

**“That’s the point, asshole.”**

**“You’re fond of everyone, Ghostbur.” He muttered.**

**“Oh, well I suppose that’s true.” The ghost nodded, smiling. Tommy rolled his eyes.**

**“We’ve got enough shit.” He said, “Let’s head back.”**

**“Okay!” Ghostbur beamed, floating up and doing circles around the tired boy as they exited the cave. Tommy stuck his hand out of the mouth opening, noticing it had stopped raining. He sighed, taking a moment to calm himself before setting out and back to the beach. Ghostbur followed along diligently, once again filling in every empty space with a story he had or his opinion on some flower Tommy’d never even heard of.**

**He slowly tuned the ghost out, focusing on putting one foot in front of the other.**

***I can do this, he thought to himself, just for a couple of weeks I can do this. For Tubbo.*** He steadied himself, taking a deep breath. The moonlight shone above, and where Ghostbur’s shadow would have fallen on Tommy’s face, the moonlight passed right through the ghost, making the blond glow in the effulgence.

**The screen went dark.**

Jack stared back and forth between Tommy and Tubbo, smiling awkwardly. He rubbed his hands together. “Wow...” He grinned, glasses slipping down to the edge of his nose, “I’m seeing a *lot* of miscommunication here.”

Both Tubbo and Tommy turned in their seats, looking properly affronted.

**“Oh shove it Manifold!” Tubbo flipped him off.**

“Like you can see anything with those stupid fuckin glasses asshole!” Tommy snarked, baring his teeth.

An awkward silence settled over them at that, and Ranboo shuffled nervously between the two. The other occupants of the room were staring intently.

“Tommy?” He began, “do you have anything to say to Tub-”

“No.” The youngest said point blank. “Not even a little bit.”

Niki rolled her eyes. Of course he was choosing to be immature about it. They’d all *clearly* seen how highly Tommy thought of Tubbo. How, more than anything, it was Tommy who needed Tubbo, and not the other way around. But the blond was still being a little brat.

“O-Okay um... Tubbo? Do you have any-”

“Nope!” Tubbo declared loudly, popping the ‘p’. Tommy glared angrily.

“One of you needs to be the first to apologize...” Sam tried, pleading with them.

“Who said anyone was apologizing?” Tommy questioned, “I’m not fucking talking to him.”

“Tommy he can *hear* you.” Puffy stressed, messy hair even more disheveled with how stressfully she’d been tugging on it.

“No no, if he wants to be immature about it that’s fine,” Tubbo put up his hands, as if in surrender, “that’s what got us into this mess, right? And the one before that? And before that,

right? He's never going to be the bigger person. That's always on me, right? Because he'll never grow up-

*"Shut up!"* Tommy hissed lowly, "I am *so* tired of you saying that about me! You're not even that much older than me, man! You're just- just a fucking prick! You're just like everyone else!"

"Oh please," Tubbo rolled his eyes, "what's that supposed to mean?"

"You use me being 'immature' as an excuse for everything!" Tommy threw his hands up in the air, "You- *All of you* push this narrative that I'm- that I'm *stupid!* But then two seconds later you're claiming I'm manipulative and selfish! As if you even consider me smart enough to know the definition of manipulative!"

"What about you then!?" Tubbo countered angrily, "you don't even listen to me! *Even when I'm trying to help you!* I'm starting to think maybe you *are* stupid because we never do things my way and you always end up losing! Maybe if you listened to me and respected me we wouldn't be here!"

"Well maybe if you'd just ran away with me when I asked you we wouldn't be here! Ever think about that?" He paid no mind to the people around them, not even when Ranboo's head tilted at the last part, "*If we'd just up and left maybe we'd still be friends!*"

And that was supposed to be the part where Tubbo would angrily scream back that they were still friends. Tommy knew it. Tubbo would yell back and they'd still be mad at each other but at least he'd know they were still friends.

"Yeah..." Tubbo smiled sadly, "maybe we would've."

Tommy said nothing, swallowing back bile and blinking back tears as he looked away. The room was quiet.

# Alone

## Chapter Summary

exile. ft. dream and tommy's wonderful friendship :) <3

TRIGGER WARNINGS!! physical abuse and manipulation

If he was being completely honest with himself, Karl and Tommy didn't have a lot of history.

Sure, he'd known the kid for awhile, but that didn't really mean anything. There wasn't any real conflict between them, but there'd never been any camaraderie either. They could appreciate one another, as when it came to certain functions and thought patterns they were on similar wavelengths, but between all the bleeding and the fighting, there hadn't really been time to have little coffee get-togethers or start some new friendship.

Still, Karl had never had anything particularly *against* Tommy. They were both loud and emotional people with a tendency to annoy others and each other. The blond was rather fond of declaring that he despised Karl, but the latter was almost completely sure it was a joke. That being said, he still had his doubts when it came to the kid. He wondered if Tommy was really... trying. To him it often seemed like Tommy just outright didn't care about others or his relationships with them. Karl at least knew when to tone it down or bring out a softer side but it seemed when tension rose Tommy's only response was getting louder and angrier. He was a walking disaster, and conflict and tragedy followed him no matter where he went. Sometimes, and just sometimes, Karl would pity the people who chose to stick around the child.

Pet peeves and personal grievances aside, however, not for even a *second* did Karl believe anyone deserved what Tommy was going through.

He considered himself to be someone pretty up to date with gossip and general knowledge around the server. He was on good terms with, well, almost everyone, so it was easy to garner info and stay in the know. Somehow, however, almost every single thing that had happened to Tommy had never made it his way.

From what he'd seen the kid had been through a *lot*, and Karl had always been rather empathetic so the whole thing had hit him harder than he'd really thought it would have. He'd been there for Pogtopia vs. L'Manberg, but had obviously never stopped to think about the child caught in the middle of it. He'd been there in the courthouse, been there to push for Tommy's exile, but he hadn't ever followed through and seen what exile actually looked like.

Hell, he hadn't even visited. Not even once.

No matter what Tommy had done, no matter how selfish and domineering he was, there wasn't a bone in Karl's body that believed the blond deserved it.

He didn't really know how to translate that, however, as his love language and well, primary form of communication was touch, and from what he'd heard and seen Tommy was extremely adverse to all forms of it.

So he did what he was second best at; lightening the mood. Even when he'd been crying just minutes before he did his best to crack jokes and take away from the severity of situations because every time he looked over Tommy looked so *uncomfortable*. He didn't know Tommy that well but through watching the memories he felt like he did, and he didn't want him to be uncomfortable. So even if everyone else thought it was annoying or not the time, it didn't really matter, because he could tell Tommy appreciated it, and he could never imagine not only going through what the kid had been through, but also having to relive it with an audience.

The problem, however, was that the more he watched the more he worried that Tommy had never been the selfish uncaring antagonist they all thought him out to be, because every memory only seemed to reinforce the idea that Tommy had been selfless on countless occasions and that he cared so unbelievably much. It was beginning to make him restless, and perhaps a bit afraid.

He tried to reaffirm his thoughts by thoroughly detailing the wrongdoings of Tommy. On his list he had being an asset to the creation of L'Manberg, rigging an election, creating conflict in general, prioritizing the discs over people, and burning down George's house. Of course,

he'd had to scrap the last two, which were... big ones, but he had faith that how he perceived Tommy wasn't wrong.

Well... Maybe, just *maybe*, he'd been a bit quick to assume. It was easier for Karl to see because of his lack of history with Tommy. It was almost like watching a stranger's recount. He'd only really heard bad things about the kid, but anyone could see that in the memories he was just a scared kid. Not only that, but the claim that the discs were more important to him than people didn't really hold up when Tommy had given two lives *and* those same discs for his older brother's country.

Karl was starting to grow worried about the kid's mental state. If anything, the lashing out and abrasiveness seemed like more of a cover up than anything after what he'd seen, and for god's sake the kid hadn't batted an eye at the Final Control room when Karl hadn't even been able to stomach the sight of it on a screen. He was... scared for what was to come next.

Because he'd always believed in seeing the good in people and extending a helping hand and he was seeing *so much* good in Tommy, and watching it be stripped from him and used against him again and again. The memory of Dream curling a hand around the blond's shoulder only to strike him across the face moments later left a bitter taste in his mouth.

What had been going on with Tommy?

He looked over, and had the kid always been so *small*? He had his knees drawn to his chest, angrily staring at the ground with chin tucked down. His hair was lighter than before, and his eyes were almost completely grey. He just... he didn't look like Tommy anymore.

"Tommy..." he began gently, one of the first sentences spoken since the argument, effectively gathering the whole room's attention, "are you alright?"

The people looked over from their seats, trying to catch a glimpse at the boy, and Tommy almost immediately pulled his hood up with his bandaged hands. He scowled, baring his teeth at the time-traveller.

"Course I fuckin am," he growled, "what kinda shit question is that?"



“Tommy, he was just trying to be nice.” Phil chided, eyes creased with his own concern for the blond. He hadn’t been speaking too much, seemingly lost inside his own head, but he still had the spirit to keep his boys in check, apparently.

“Didn’t fucking ask him to, did I?” Tommy rolled his eyes, crossing his arms with a huff and aggravating many people.

“You don’t have to be a dick about it.” Sapnap pointed out somewhat defensively, intertwining his hand with Karl’s.

“Stay out of my business then.” The blond muttered, hunching further in on himself.

“Kinda hard to when your ‘business’ is right there.” Technoblade piped up, gesturing boredly at the screen.

“Piss off and die.” Tommy hissed angrily, flipping his older brother off.

“How charming you are.” The piglin hybrid replied, a sort of amusement in his tone. If Tommy didn’t know better he’d have thought Technoblade actually enjoyed speaking to him. He grit his teeth, looking forward without saying a word.

Tubbo was completely silent and still on Ranboo’s right.

**“Tommy?” a voice called, “Tommy wake up.”**

**Tommy groaned, rolling over onto his side. He squirmed at the stiffness in his bones, clenching his eyes shut even tighter and scrunching up his face in displeasure. He felt the grass beneath him, itching his skin.**

**When he finally opened his eyes, he immediately had to put up a hand to shield himself from the harsh glare of the sun. Crouched next to him was none other than Dream himself, watching silently. Tommy stared, face blank.**

**“Why’d you sleep on the ground, Tommy?” Dream asked, tilting his head, “I built you shelter.”**

**“Don’t need your pity.” Was all the blond said, rolling onto his other side and turning his back to the man.**

**“You slept on the *ground*?” Puffy questioned, eyes wide, “It was wet and freezing out!”**

**“How many times do I have to say I don’t want to accept the disgusting fucking pity gifts before you idiots get it through your heads? Hm?” Tommy asked, lip curling distastefully.**

**“You have got to be the most annoying stubborn person in the world.” Fundy laughed incredulously.**

**“It’s not pity, Tommy.” Dream sighed, using his shoulder to manually roll the teen back so they were facing each other, “I just care about you. That’s it.”**

**Tommy stared at him, face impassive for a moment, before rising up. He brushed bits of dirt and grass off of himself before he spoke.**

**“Too bad I couldn’t give a single fuck about you.” He laughed bitterly, idly sorting through his inventory and going through the things he’d collected the night before. Dream looked intrigued, inching closer.**

**“You don’t have to be so rude...” Niki frowned. She had never been a large fan of Dream but she still believed in treating others how you wanted to be treated. (Unless they didn’t deserve it)**

“He’s being fake though,” Sapnap intervened, “like, one hundred percent.”

“What so then why’d he build all that stuff and say those things to Tommy?” Jack cocked a brow, staring intently.

There was a lapse in conversation, and a few people got the message. Those who didn’t... well they’d see eventually. Tommy curled in tighter on himself. Deep down he knew Dream had never been sincere, that he’d been manipulating him from the beginning, but even deeper down, closer to his heart, he wanted so badly to believe that Dream cared about him. Dream was his friend. He wasn’t, but he was. He cared about Tommy. He didn’t. He did.

Tommy ~~loved~~ hated Dream.

**“Did you go out to gather things last night?” The masked man asked curiously, hands folded neatly behind his back. Tommy gave him one of his trademark disgusted looks.**

**“Yeah.” He muttered, continuing to rifle through his items, taking his eyes off the taller man.**

**He didn’t look up until he heard the sound of digging.**

**Tommy swallowed thickly, looking up and over to the side. Much like the night before, Dream was knelt beside a hole, silent but threatening.**

Tubbo paled, gripping Ranboo’s hand even tighter. He had no clue what was going on. The extent of his knowledge about exile was that it hadn’t been pleasant and that Tommy had been lonely. That was all he really knew.

Dream actively taking and destroying all of Tommy’s items was *not* something he’d known.

“Again?” Quackity demanded, “are you fucking kidding me?”

Tommy smiled softly to himself, hugging his middle tighter. If only they knew how often Dream had stood before a hole he’d dug, explosives in hand. Even then, in the tiny room, Tommy could still hear the sound of TNT going off in the distance. He could still feel his ears ringing and his eyes watering at the dust and debris.

“Surely he’s not serious,” Phil chuckled nervously, “I mean he *just* took your things... right, Tommy?”

The silence was anything but reassuring.

“Well?” Dream began, and you could *hear* the grin in his tone, “let’s go.”

Tommy scrunched up his face, nose wrinkling with distaste. He closed his inventory, straightening his posture.

“Look man,” He sighed, “you got me in a bad spot last night, but if you think for a *second* this is gonna be a regular happening then you’ve got another thing coming.”

Dream said nothing, looking down the hole and then back at Tommy. He stood, staring imposingly. “Tommy,” he addressed, much more threatening, “don’t make me use force. You know I don’t want to.”

No one felt comfortable with what the man was insinuating.

“What the hell is with you, dude?” Tommy shook his head, backing up, “I don’t even know why you’re doing this to me!”

“I’m doing this *for* you.” Dream corrected, stepping over the hole and closer to the blond. “This is part of your punishment, Tommy. You need to learn.”

**“How is this making me learn!? *What* is this making me learn!?” Tommy cried out, gesturing towards the hole, “I don’t even-”**

**A loud *smack!* resounded throughout the area, and Tommy fell to the ground.**

Phil felt his heart drop instantly, trying to grasp onto some form of clarity as he sucked in a sharp breath. He clenched his fists tightly, failing to keep in check.

Puffy gasped, hands flying to cover her mouth as she stared agape.

Sapnap wrenched his hand from Karl’s grip, smoke emanating from his skin in little curls and wisps as he quickly heated up.

**Tommy tongued his cheek, glaring up at the man. He rubbed at the sore spot, quickly moving to rise to his feet. He was stopped by a foot on his chest.**

**“If you’re getting up,” Dream began, a playful lilt in his tone, “it better not be for any reason other than to put your things in the hole.”**

**The blond stared up at him for a moment, face contorted into an ugly expression. He pushed to stand again, and Dream let him. He eyed the man for a moment, chin tilted up, before he turned and tried to leave.**

**He was stopped by a hand on his shoulder.**

**“Look Tommy,” the masked man sighed, “there’s only two ways you’re walking out of here... and one of them ends with you in a body bag.”**

**Tommy looked down, noticing the glint of an axe behind him. He stiffened.**

**“And the other?” He managed, voice thick.**

**“Just put your things in the hole.” Dream grinned, “It’s as simple as that.”**

“He- You just got those things though!” Fundy cried, “Like *just* got them! He can’t destroy them-”

“Why not?” Tommy interrupted, making the whole room go silent. The fox hybrid frowned, ears pinning back.

“...What?”

“Why can’t he?” The blond asked, there was no real heat to his words, and somehow that made it worse, “I mean, it’s *his* server, right? And it’s not like anyone was there to stop him... right?”

Ouch.

Many of them flinched at that, feeling the accusation despite the fact that it had felt so empty and dull. It was still pointed enough to hurt.

“Tommy...” Sam started quietly, eyes sad.

Tommy said nothing.

**Tommy turned around, still stiff as a board. He took a couple of steps towards the hole, staring down. He looked back at Dream, considering his options but ultimately knowing he was outmatched. He grit his teeth, opening his inventory.**

**Moments later came the sounds of explosions.**

Tommy hissed quietly at the noise, biting down so hard on his tongue that his mouth was more blood than saliva. He was fine. It was fine. It was all fine.

Jack grimaced at the sight as Niki felt something odd tug at her heartstrings.

**“That wasn’t so bad now, was it?” Dream chuckled, clapping a hand on Tommy’s shoulder.**

*Don’t touch me. Don’t you fucking touch me.*

**“Fuck you.” Tommy growled out, escaping the grip and fleeing towards the grassy plains.**

**“Aw don’t be like that,” Dream pouted, chasing after excitedly, “the day’s just begun, Tommy!”**

**They disappeared into the distance.**

The group stared silently, not sure what to say or where to start.

“So...” Technoblade hummed awkwardly, “he do that often?”

Tommy tensed instantly, shoulders hiking up. “I don’t feel like talking about this with any of you, thank you very much.” He bit out.

“I don’t like...” George waved his hand around, “Get it... *why* does he blow up your stuff like that?” He asked, “Like... like what’s the point?”

Tommy frowned deeply at the memories, swishing the blood around in his mouth. The point was to keep him exhausted. The point was to keep him defenseless. The point was to keep him dependent. The point was to keep him afraid.

“Fuck if I know...” He muttered instead.

He then looked to Tubbo, though out of the corner of his eye so as to not draw attention or get caught. The older teen was completely silent, and hadn’t spoken since... well... Tommy felt a bitter taste on his tongue at the thought of his fr- at Tubbo’s words. How long had the elder been pretending to be his friend? How long had Tommy been annoying him?

It was fucking humiliating, actually, and he wanted to curl up into a little ball and die.

With Phil siding with Techno, Dream in prison, and Wilbur dead; Tubbo was all Tommy had, right? Of course, he supposed, there was Ranboo, who seemed to care about him an awful lot, and Tommy’d be lying if he said he didn’t care for the older boy as well, but Ranboo would obviously choose Tubbo, and he’d be alone. He’d had Sam... but... well he didn’t want to think about it.

Tubbo was all he’d had left and it turned out the boy hadn’t even wanted to be his friend.

Of course, the words from their argument had stung in the moment, but looking back on them now that he knew Tubbo had no attachment to him when he said them, well, they hurt like hell.

**“Dream!” Tommy laughed excitedly, “you didn’t!”**

**The masked man could barely contain his own amusement, “I did!”**



**They were sitting side by side on a log by a fire on the beach. It was dark out, and it seemed to be the same day as the memory before. Tommy was shivering, but didn't say anything or make a move to get any closer to the fire. He was, however, smiling wide.**

Everyone was taken aback by the jarring change of pace. The scene before them was comfortable and... happy. Both of the people in the memory seemed to be enjoying themselves and comfortable.

Ranboo had to swallow back bile at the sight of a smile on Tommy's face as they watched.

**"I kid you not I literally did." Dream grinned, basking in the flame's glow.**

Sapnap's heart ached, longing for the sound of his friend's voice just like that. It'd been so long since him George and Dream had just... been together.

**"You are such a fuckin weirdo." Tommy shook his head, smiling.**

**He went quiet however, eyes trained on the fire, and suddenly a solemn feeling washed over him. The smile slipped from his face and the flames dimmed.**

**Dream seemed to notice the shift in mood, looking down.**

**"Is something wrong?" He asked tentatively. Tommy didn't meet his gaze.**

**"Tommy." He tried again, voice more firm, "What's going on?"**

**The blond didn't turn his head, but he did glance up slightly. His eyes flicked back to the fire for a moment before he sighed, hugging himself tightly.**

**“It’s just...” He paused, anxiously toeing at the sand beneath them. “It’s been three days, Dream. Why hasn’t anyone visited?”**

Quackity breathed out shakily, suddenly feeling very very guilty. The rage that had been building up inside of him and directed at Dream was being turned onto himself. “Are you telling me Dream was... *Dream* was the only one that visited?”

“Well yeah...” Tommy muttered, “I only had like. One other person who tried to actually visit. Ayup Ranboo.” He saluted the hybrid beside him, and Ranboo did a little wave.

“Jesus...” Quackity sighed, running a hand through his hair. Tommy glared at him.

“Oh don’t act like it’s such a big deal now,” the blonde hissed, “don’t act like you didn’t know no one was showing up.”

All the duck hybrid could do was stare sadly, because at the end of the day he’d known. At the end of the day, they’d all known that no one was taking the time to go see Tommy. And they chose to gloss over it. There had been bigger things on the table back then. The cabinet didn’t have time for someone who didn’t care about the country.

Tubbo shifted uncomfortably.

**“I visited.” Dream replied lightly. Tommy smiled halfheartedly.**

**“Other than you.” He huffed.**

**“Technoblade visited.”**

**“He showed up to- to make fun of me. That doesn’t count.”**

“It was a visit. Don’t discredit that.” Technoblade interjected, unimpressed. Tommy rolled his eyes.

“You watched me mine for like, four minutes, Technoblade. That was *not* a visit.” He replied.

**“Ghostbur visited.”**

**“Ghostbur half-lives here. Also, he doesn’t count.”**

**“It sounds to me like you’re being really dramatic, Tommy,” Dream hummed, and the blond’s eyes instantly widened, “I just listed three separate people that have visited you and you shut them down. Including myself.”**

Puffy didn’t like how panicked Tommy got at that.

**“I wasn’t- That wasn’t-” Tommy stumbled over his words, choking.**

**“Beggars can’t be choosers.” The elder scolded, presence suddenly much more imposing. “I can stop visiting if that’s what you want.”**

**“No!” Tommy cried out, instantly moving as if he was about to hold Dream down. He caught himself, settling back down. He swallowed, staring into the fire. “I’m sorry Dream. You’re right.”**

Phil curled his lip in disgust at the screen. How *dare* that man hit and brutalize his son, destroy everything his son had, *speak down* on his son like that, and then make Tommy think he was a friend? He could barely stomach how terrified Tommy looked at the threat.

**“I just don’t want you getting your expectations too high.” Dream murmured, reaching out to put a hand on Tommy’s shoulder. “I mean, like you said, it’s been three days, and barely anyone’s come to see you or even messaged you.”**

Tubbo felt anger boiling in his veins. He never wanted to see Dream lay a hand on Tommy ever again. He could barely contain himself, shaking with unbridled fury.

**Tommy took a shaky breath, leaning into the touch.**

**“Maybe they just don’t care about you like you care about them.”**

Tubbo sucked in a breath, not going unnoticed by Tommy. The brunet grit his teeth, looking away. The truth was that he cared *so* much. Tommy was everything to him. Tommy was his twin flame. They were one in the same. There wasn’t a day that went by that he didn’t regret exile with his entire chest; because Tommy had never been the same since. He missed his brother so dearly. He missed his other half, and now he could clearly see who had taken that from him.

Tommy, however, took the sharp inhale as something it wasn’t. He watched Tubbo turn his head and felt his heart sink. Was his reaction to what Dream said not confirmation enough that it was true? Dream may have manipulated and hurt him, but everything he told Tommy was the truth. At the end of the day, Tommy had always seen Tubbo as his brother. He’d always seen Tubbo as his other half, but really he was some discarded half without anyone to complete him. He realized that now.

Dream had made it very clear he was never destined to be whole.

**The blond grimaced, as though he was physically in pain. He gritted his teeth, shutting his eyes tight as both the moonlight and light from the fire bounced off his pale skin.**

**“I just...” He took a nervous breath, “I don’t like being alone Dream. I *really* don’t like being alone.” He silently cursed the tears building in his eyes, willing them away.**

And oh if that didn't hurt.

Jack desperately tried to ignore the telltale sound of his own voice in the back of his head that was trying to remind him that Tommy had been his *friend*, and that his heart couldn't take seeing it, but fuck his heart.

Ranboo cringed at the words, closing his eyes and willing his own tears away. He'd known exile was bad, he'd seen Tommy slowly grow worse and worse, but the details made it all the more gruesome.

Technoblade felt a pang in his chest, the words of his younger brother on the screen digging up memories of storybooks and sharing the bed with a little blond toddler who'd had a nightmare. He pushed them all backdown.

**“That’s okay,” Dream soothed, pulling the blond into an embrace, resting his chin on the top of Tommy’s head, “you’re not alone Tommy.” He hummed, “I’m here.”**

*Get off of him*, Phil couldn't help the thought, wings hiked up and tense behind him as he stared. He wanted that man away from his son. He wanted to *go* to his son, but Tommy had made it clear any attempt to coddle him or well, be a basic human being and comfort him, would be met with violence and screaming.

Karl held back tears, trying to control himself. He couldn't help the panic rising in him as he thought, *all this for an accident?*

**Tommy leaned into it, soaking up the feeling. He allowed himself to take a deep breath and calm himself. He wasn't alone. He had Dream.**

**He smiled.**

# Be Worse

## Chapter Summary

jack manifold. also mushroom henry. (yes i changed her origins rip antfrost but my version's better so)

TW ABUSE GORE/ANIMAL DEATH AND MANIPULATION!

“Are you alright, Jack?”

Tommy looked up from where he was sitting, feeling a shiver go down his spine and burying himself deeper in his sweater. Jack was in the back row, hunched over and silent. Puffy seemed to have noticed his absence from conversation, as well as his lack of snarky comments.

The older man raised his head, grinning awkwardly at the eyes on him. His mismatched glasses were askew, slightly weighing too far on the right.

“Yeah yeah,” He waved the comment off, “just tired of watching this shit is all.” He hummed, letting his hand fall back into his lap.

Puffy cocked a brow, looking at him oddly, as if she knew something he didn’t. He didn’t linger on it for long. It seemed these days most people knew things he didn’t. He would say he’d fallen out of the loop, but a prerequisite of doing so would be to have been in the loop in the first place.

He noticed Tommy staring at him blankly, and for a moment he didn’t react, only staring back. He was taken aback by just how different the boy looked. Even in the dark, pale lighting, where vision was reduced and he was staring through blue and red tinted glasses, he could see Tommy’s pallor. His cheeks were sunken in, so much so that it was actually quite jarring, and he had to steel himself over at the sight. That wasn’t... It wasn’t *his* Tommy.

For just a split second, just a fraction of a moment, he allowed himself an instance of weakness. Jack felt his heart lurch in his rotting chest, a heart that had stopped beating when his mind and body was dragged down to hell, his heart that hadn't started back up since, and let himself feel.

When he'd first joined the server, Tommy had been ecstatic. The little blond had gone around *everywhere* showing him off like some trophy and proudly declaring that he was his and Tubbo's very own Sapnap. At the time it hadn't made much sense, but looking back, it was undeniably endearing. Jack could still remember holding back laughter as Tommy dragged him down the prime path giggling excitedly and explaining how happy he was to have Jack with him.

Then came the elections, and Jack was pushed to the side along with everyone else. Even Niki and Fundy, who had been in the race themselves, didn't really matter. The only ones truly involved were the men who took whatever they wanted with no regard for others. Jack was no exception, in fact, he was the exact opposite.

He'd spent time moping. He'd gone through the motions repeatedly, a constant mantra of "how could they leave me?" and "why don't they want me?" over and over until his tongue was ash and his brain was eroded. Day after day, night after night, the fear of being alone plagued him. The fear of never being loved again was all he knew.

It wasn't until he was shoved by the shaky hands of his former ally that things began to change.

When he gazed into those greying eyes of a friend long gone, until he saw the apathy in them, the world shifted on its axis.

He saw the smile. He heard the laugh. His death, the most painful thing he'd ever experienced, the thing that kept him up screaming and writhing around at night, was amusing to Tommy.

That was when things began to become clear.

It wasn't instant, no, and he often clung to the comforting idea that they didn't *mean* to forget him. Early in the mornings, as he wandered in the snow, the only place he felt safe from the neverending heat, he liked to imagine they still cared about him. He liked to imagine that anyone, just one fucking person, cared about him.

But he'd seen Tommy's smile and empty eyes and he knew better.

No one cared for him. He was expendable and unknown. There wasn't a single soul out there that would care if he died, and he was proven right when he'd done exactly that.

Speared through the throat by the Blood God himself, he'd been ripped apart and dragged down into hell. That should have been it. It should have been his end. But he'd looked the universe in the eye and denied it.

Jack Manifold had come back from the dead with nothing but sheer rage, determination, and a desperate need to spite the ones that wanted him dead.

What he'd quickly realized, however, was that had he not done just that, his end would have been quiet and unannounced. No one would have cared. He wouldn't have been mourned.

And that was when the switch flipped in its entirety.

Like an animal, Jack had greedily sunk his claws into others, latching onto them and snaking himself around their shoulders. He squeezed himself into places he didn't belong, spoke to people who ignored him, he did *everything*.

Finally, *finally*, his fear of being unknown had overcome his fear of being hated. And thus was born the words he lived by. He was going to be worse than anyone the server had ever known. Schlatt? That washed-up drunk had nothing on him. He would be worse.

Because above all, Schlatt might've been the villain, but he was known. Jack didn't pretend to be good. He knew his mind was sullied and broken. He knew he was frowned upon by the



saints and the sinners alike. He was, after all, a desperate man. He didn't have dignity or class but he had drive, and he was going to scramble and clumsily grab for what he needed. He would continue to cling onto the idea of being seen until the dark tendrils of Hell dragged him right back down.

And the best way to achieve that was by wiping the server clean of the disgusting little stain upon it. He would rid them all of the selfish bastards that had caused all the pain and suffering. He would kill them both.

Dream, the server admin, who was quite literally the owner of their world. He was revered and feared and so undeniably seen. No matter where he went, people talked. No matter what he said, people followed. He didn't command attention and recognition, he merely received it on a silver platter. He instigated conflict with the snap of his fingers, brought nations to their feet with just pointed words, and involved himself in every little spat for the sake of it. He was nothing if not the villain.

And Tommy, the sniveling brat who'd pretended to be Jack's friend, the harbinger of chaos, and Dream's other half. He was loud and violent, no matter what he did, destruction came soon after. No matter who he allied himself with, wars broke out. He was an unruly force, an imbalance in their server. He wasn't some heroic presence, and he wasn't the light that countered Dream's dark; he was himself and he was an agent of disorder.

Because the truth was that Tommy's fighting spirit and selfishness brought nothing but bloodshed and death. He was a bad omen, and Dream knew that, Dream saw his power and *used* that.

Jack couldn't let either of them live.

The bright-eyed fourteen-year-old with shiny braces and a hat too big for his head who had first introduced Jack to the server was dead. He'd been dead since his first exile, and Jack didn't have the time to mourn; not while that fake was in his place.

The old Tommy would thank Jack.

He grit his teeth, glaring harshly at the blond, and Tommy continued to stare. He snarled at the kid, clenching his fists and ignoring the horrid pain in his chest.

The truth was that he was beginning to panic. Something was undeniably *wrong*. He tried to push down the restlessness, covering it with his anger, but it was still there, bubbling beneath the surface. He could feel it threatening to boil over, angrily shaking the pot, but he'd be damned if he let it. He wasn't there to sympathize with Tommy. No matter what the memories showed, he had made up his mind. He would be worse than anyone. He would be *known*. And he would take out the fucking brat who had made him feel loved and seen just to take it all away.

Tommy finally looked away, not saying a word. He had his knees drawn to his chest, hunched in on himself as though he was freezing. Jack scowled, looking down.

"Are you two really still not talking?" Karl asked, drawing Jack away from his internal monologue. The time traveler was lazily draped across Quackity, but frowning with concern all the same as he looked back and forth between Tommy and Tubbo.

"If Tommy has anything to say I'm all ears." Tubbo commented bitterly, crossing his arms and looking away. Tommy scowled, baring his teeth.

"Well I don't." He hissed, "So fuck off!"

"Tommy..." Phil chided, frowning deeply. His son paid him no mind, stewing silently in his rage. Ranboo looked heavily distressed, not sure who to go to. His mouth was drawn into a thin line, eyes glowing in the dim light.

"It's fine," Tubbo said, "let's just keep watching. I don't care."

The screen flickered to life.

**It was early morning, sun just peaking over the treeline. The beach was desolate and cold, deserted save for the tiny white tent on the edge of the grass.**

**Tommy wordlessly exited his shelter, looking dead on his feet. His hair was a ratty mess, eyes were without their usual lackluster. He simply *looked* duller, as if the colour had been drained from him.**

**“Oh god...” Quackity muttered, looking away from the screen. He couldn’t stand seeing Tommy like that.**

**He let out a quiet sigh, eyeing the water wearily. He restlessly fidgeted with his hands at his side.**

**“Please don’t come...” He muttered quietly, gaze never leaving the line where the sky met the sea.**

**Phil’s heart twisted at the sight, brows drawing together sadly.**

**That’s where he stood until his shadow was half as tall; watching quietly, barely moving. He had no armour, and there was nothing but the sound of the wind in the trees and the waves lapping at the shore.**

**Tommy swallowed thickly, sparing one last glance towards the water before turning to the grassy fields before him. He buried his face in his scarf for just a moment, closing his eyes and letting the sounds of an empty world consume him.**

**When his eyes opened, they seemed a bit more blue and a bit more determined. He nodded once to himself, straightening his back.**

**“Let’s go gathering.” He declared quietly to himself before setting off into the fields. He trekked forward, wooden axe in hand. It wasn’t much, but it was something.**

**The grass was tall, the sort of itchy tall that went up past your shins and had you in a panic about ticks and other evil creatures. The sky had shifted from its pale orange to a bright blue, clouds floating sparsely in the sky. The chickadees and sparrows chirped loudly in the trees off to the side, their cries echoing out for miles. Tommy smiled softly as the wind ruffled through his hair.**

“It is quite gorgeous.” George commented. “I didn’t know we had places like that on the server.”

“Well if we were there, it’d just be a bunch of pavement and some McPuffy’s and Tar-Gay’s.” Sam replied, eyes never leaving the screen.

**He began a small trip up the hills, the valley on the other side just out of sight. Tommy readjusted his bag on his shoulder, gripping his axe tight, and crossed over the mounds of dirt and grass.**

**His heart stopped as the larger clearing came into view, eyes widening with horror.**

“Oh my god...” Puffy muttered, covering her mouth in shock.

**For miles, the green grass was splattered with the blood and bodies of cattle and sheep. As far as the eye spanned, there was a corpse to keep up with it. Just laying there, all of them. If it hadn’t been for the gruesome bloodiness of it all, it would’ve looked as if all of the animals had simply dropped dead where they were standing.**

“Jesus fuck...” Phil hissed, making a face at the sight.

*“That’s horrible!”* Niki cried out, affronted.

**Tommy made a face, as though he was pained, before quietly descending down closer. He hefted up his axe as he neared, weary.**

**Making his way over to a large sheep, he knelt at its side, staring into its dead empty eyes. There was a large gash in its side, half of its organs spilled out onto the earth. Maggots and flies had already claimed it as their own, digging around hungrily inside.**

**He gagged, turning away.**

“Who the fuck would do that?” Jack questioned, looking thoroughly disturbed.

“Take a wild fucking guess, Manifold.” Fundy rolled his eyes.

“But *why*?” Sapnap pressed, frowning deeply.

“To keep Tommy from gettin’ any food.” Techno huffed out, arms crossed. Neither his tone nor posture was any indication of how he felt about the matter, and the others had no idea what he was actually feeling.

No one said a word, but the implications were swirling around in their minds.

Ranboo felt a scarred hand grab his own clawed appendage, and saw his husband gripping his hand with a panicked ferocity he refused to show aloud.

**“I’m so sorry...” Tommy whispered, though he was already quickly getting to his feet and moving on. There was nothing he could do for the creature, and he swiftly moved to inspect other corpses, checking to see if any of them were more recent and salvageable.**

**As he made his way along, he neared the edge of the forest, and approached a mooshroom’s body. The poor dear had been almost completely gutted, messily splattered on the grass like some morbid modern art piece. He sighed, pulling his green**

**scarf up to cover the bottom half of his face and crouching down low. Its eyes had been pecked out, and most of its insides were hastily dragged away or mauled on after its belly was slit down the middle.**

Niki let out a low whine, hiding her face in her hands as Puffy and Karl followed suit. Many of them, however, stared in some state of grotesque wonder.

Tommy only felt his heart twist at the memory, knowing exactly where things were headed.

**Just as he was about to issue an apology and move on, Tommy noticed movement from behind the tree closest to the corpse. He frowned, peering at the shadowed area. Again, something shifted from behind the trunk.**

**Slowly, a young calf emerged from the shadows, eyeing Tommy wearily. She had big floppy ears and a shiny coat, though some of it was splattered with blood that wasn't her own. Her bony legs were shaking, knees nearly clacking together.**

“That poor baby...” Ranboo frowned.

“She’s adorable.” Sam commented quietly.

**Tommy’s eyes lit up at the sight of her, and he quickly lowered completely into the grass so as not to spook her. She dipped her head at him, staring at him with large glassy eyes.**

**“Hello darling,” He cooed, sitting cross-legged and ignoring the body just inches away, “It’s alright, I won’t hurt you.”**

**She took a bashful step forward, still shaking for dear life. Tommy pulled a carrot from his inventory, the last of his rations, urging her forwards. “It’s okay, dear.” He assured, smiling softly.**

“Aww Tommy.” Puffy couldn’t help the grin on her face. It was such an endearing moment.

“Don’t ‘aww’ me.” Tommy grumbled.

**Slowly, she approached him, until she was just inches away. He held out the carrot, and she quietly took a bite, moving a bit closer.**

**“Good girl,” he hummed, smiling down at her.**

**The screen went dark.**

“I think I remember her.” Ranboo commented, “You named her Mushroom Henry.”

“What the hell is wrong with you?” Fundy asked, “That’s an awful name.”

“Fuck off fox boy!” Tommy flipped him off. “Mushroom Henry is a *lovely* name.”

No one addressed the fact that Mushroom Henry was very much *not* with Tommy any longer. They remained silent, still processing the blood caricature that had been painted for them all.

**Back at Logstedshire, Tommy fiddled with the lead attached to Mushroom Henry’s neck, quietly tying it to a fence post. He looked to be deep in concentration, and the blood had been washed from her coat.**

**“Tommy!” A voice called excitedly from behind him, making him jump. He instantly whirled on his feet, coming face to face with the empty smile of Dream’s mask. The man was extremely close, standing completely still.**

“He’s there *again?*” Sapnap began, exasperated. Tommy glared.

“Yeah.” He bit out harshly, “He was there all the time. He was the only one.”

No one really knew what to say to that.

**“...What’s that?” He asked, pointing towards the little red calf. She shied away, hiding behind her owner’s leg.**

**“It’s me cow bitch!” Tommy declared proudly, “Didn’t really *want* her but something awful happened to her mum so she’s with me now.”**

**Dream cocked his head to the side, though it was impossible to see what he was thinking. “What happened?” He questioned, voice laced with concern. Tommy sighed.**

**“Someone fuckin gutted all the animals and just... *left ‘em* there.” The blond frowned, thinking back to the gruesome pictures in his mind.**

**“That’s awful...” Dream frowned, “who would do that?”**

“His acting skills are awful.” Techno commented dryly.

“No they aren’t, asshole, you just *know* he’s acting is all.” Quackity shot back.

“Or maybe *you* just wouldn’t have been able to tell.” He pressed.

Tommy curled in on himself uncomfortably, feeling shame rise up in him. Was he really stupid? Would anyone else have gotten manipulated and... and *used* like he had?



**“Well I was kinda thinkin *you*, Big D,” Tommy said pointedly, “since y’know, you’re a wrongen and all. Wouldn’t put it past you.”**

**Instantly, the mood shifted, and Dream somehow seemed to grow taller. He loomed over Tommy imposingly.**

**“Do you really think I’d do something like that, Tommy?” He asked, sounding hurt, “I... I thought we were *friends*.”**

**“Freak.” Fundy hissed angrily, tail puffing up at the scene. Tommy laughed loudly, trying to ease the tension in his bones but to no avail.**

**Instantly, Tommy faltered. He wilted at the words, frowning deeply. “I-”**

**“Is that really what you think of me, Tommy?” Dream pressed on, taking a step closer, “You think that lowly of me?”**

**Tommy backed away, eyes widening. Mushroom Henry pressed her snout worriedly into the back of his knee. “No, I- It was a joke, Dream! A joke! Of course, I don’t think you would-”**

**He was interrupted by Dream unsheathing his sword.**

**“You’re kidding...” Karl managed, eyes going wide. Surely he wouldn’t...**

**Tubbo felt his heart drop, chewing anxiously on his nails.**

**Instantly, the blond moved to protect his face, covering it with his arms and shutting his eyes tightly in terrified anticipation.**

The whole room was on the edge of their seats, terrified and abashedly intrigued.

**But the blow never came, and when he opened his eyes, Dream was standing completely still.**

**“Move to the side, Tommy.” He commanded icily. The blond looked confused for just a moment, before realization dawned on him.**

**“What are you-”**

**Dream pushed him to the side, staring down at the little calf, and he felt his heart stop.**

**“...What?”**

**“Dream stop!” He cried out, pushing to get in the way.**

**“No, this is what you think of me, right?” The man hissed through clenched teeth,  
“Why shouldn’t I?”**

**“She didn’t do anything!” Tommy shook his head, feeling panic spread in his chest,  
“she’s just a baby!”**

Tension rose in the room in fear of watching another terrible death play out.

**Dream raised his sword.**

**“No!” Tommy screamed, throwing out a hand to knock the sword away.**

Phil shut his eyes tight, looking away, terrified he'd see his son marred by the blade.

**But the man paused, turning to look at the teen and lowering his weapon. They stood in silence for a moment before Dream dropped his sword to the ground.**

They stared in confusion, much like the Tommy on screen.

**“Unbelievable,” Dream shook his head, huffing out a laugh, “*Unbelievable!*”**

**Tommy flinched at the raise in volume, shrinking in on himself. He stared at the blade in contemplative silence.**

**“Dream what-”**

**“You actually thought I was going to do it.” The masked man sighed, shoulders dropping, “You *really* think that lowly of me.”**

Puffy gaped at the screen, unable to even form a coherent thought. Of *course* Tommy'd thought he was going to do it; They'd *all* thought he was going to do it.

“What the fuck is wrong with him!?” Quackity seethed, taking deep and barely controlled breaths.

Tommy tried to tune them all out, too embarrassed about what was being shown on screen to really engage with any more stupid commentary that only made him feel weaker.

**“Dream...” Tommy began softly, hand falling to his side.**

**“No.” The elder denied, “It’s fine. I get it. I mean, it hurts... like, a *lot*, but I still get it.” He turned on his heel, putting away his sword that he’d picked back up and shoving his hands in his pockets. “I’ll stop visiting if that’s what you want. I see it now, Tommy. I’m sorry for being a problem.”**

Jack couldn’t help the way his lips curved into an ugly frown. Even he could see what the man was doing.

**Tommy’s eyes widened at the receding figure, and without even thinking about it he bolted after the man.**

**Dream paused as he felt a tug on his wrist, turning around slowly. Tommy was staring at the sand, fists clenched.**

**“I’m sorry,” he whispered, “I’m so sorry Dream. Please, *please*, don’t go.”**

“Tommy...” Sam frowned, looking towards the blond.

“Shut. Up.” Tommy said through gritted teeth, face flushed with embarrassment.

**Dream stared at him for a moment, watching the way his shoulders shook and he grimaced through gritted teeth. He could see how humiliated and vulnerable the boy was. He silently tilted his head, shadow falling over the mask.**

**He reached out, tilting Tommy’s chin up with delicate fingers. The blonde’s eyes were glassy and wide, and for a second he felt the ghost of his brother’s hand cupping his cheek. He leaned forward without even realizing it, and Dream grinned from behind his mask.**

The scene felt incredibly eerie and sinister, and Tubbo had to look away. None of them could truly stomach what they were seeing.

**“Oh Tommy,” he crooned, “are you doing alright?” He stroked at the large bags under Tommy’s eye with his thumb, leaning in. The boy barely managed to conceal a whimper, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath.**

Niki’s heart did an odd lurch at the noise, something sick and twisted beginning to sprout in her chest. She glanced at the boy on screen, biting the inside of her cheek.

Surely *this* was more than enough ‘consequences’ for his actions... right?

She dug her nails into her palms, muttering something incomprehensible to herself and pushing something ugly and raw back down inside of her.

**“I... I can’t sleep, Dream.” he admitted shakily, “it’s just so cold and- and *lonely*.”**

Phil sucked in a large breath, feeling his mouth go dry. His heart broke in two at the sight, panic growing inside of him as he wrestled with the fact that there was nothing he could actually do to prevent or stop it.

**And it was true. He was kept up late at night by the haunting memories of the pit and his father’s blade coated in Wilbur’s blood. He’d become so accustomed to the feeling of his big brother’s body next to his in bed, a protective warm figure, there to keep him safe, that the cold unforgiving emptiness of the beach was especially chilling.**

**He didn’t know what to do without Wilbur to follow.**

**“I’m so, *so* sorry for accusing you of something like that,” he murmured, “I’m just- I’m tired, Dream. I wanna go home...”**

Tubbo had to bite his tongue to conceal the wounded sound that nearly escaped him at the words. Ranboo squeezed his hand once, assuring him he was there.

**The wind blew harshly, scattering the sand at their feet. He felt a chill run up his spine.**

**“Tommy...” Dream began sadly, “They don’t want you there.”**

The room went very still, the temperature dropping. They waited with bated breath to hear Tommy’s reply.

**“I know.” Tommy whispered hollowly, letting silence envelop them.**

Something shifted within them all at those words.

“Tommy *no*.” Fundy hissed, looking pained, “Why did you- *why did you listen to him?*”

Tommy said nothing, angrily grinding his teeth and trying to keep his composure.

“We wanted you there *so* bad,” Quackity urged, frowning deeply, “we missed you *so* much.”

The room was silent for a moment, the people quietly anticipating an outburst or some bitter reply.

“*Then why didn’t you visit me?*” The blond whispered quietly, not looking up.

Quackity felt his heart drop, bravado falling. “I-”

“I *waited* for you,” Tommy began, voice rising slightly, “*any* of you.” He turned to look at them, eyes dull and face impassive where it should have been expressive and angry, “but you

didn't visit. And if you did it was once. Some short pathetic visit where you brought me a stupid fuckin pity gift to clear your own conscience and then you were *gone*."

"Tommy-"

"You didn't even- You didn't even *say anything!*" the blond laughed, tears pricking at his eyes. "Some of you even made fun of me 'cause you thought it was some big fuckin joke!"

"We-"

"You left me with him." Tommy stated, voice steady and empty. He was smiling bitterly, shaking his head. "You left me with *Dream*."

"And do you know *why* it was so easy for Dream to convince me that I was alone? That he was the only one there?" Tommy tilted his head, the room in complete silence, "it was because he didn't have to lie."

They watched him as he smiled, not having any idea what to say or how to refute his statement.

"So I don't care!" He laughed, "I don't care anymore! I'm over it! I *had* to get over it!" His eyes scanned the rows of people, "You can sit here now and say you're sorry and that you meant to visit, but the fact is that you *didn't*. Ranboo was the only one and you know what? That was the only thing that kept me going most nights," he laughed, shaking his head, "it's easy to sit here and say you didn't know but you should have, and I don't fucking care anymore."

Quackity took a deep breath, tasting blood on his tongue. One look over and he could see tears streaming down Karl's face.

"I'm sorry, Tommy." He whispered quietly.

“I don’t need your sorry.” Tommy muttered, “I don’t *want* sorries or pity. I *wanted* to go home. And- and *I’m* sorry because I *know* you had other things going on and I *know* that I’m not the only person that matters... but that was the one time I needed someone the most. You all think I’m mad about the fact that I got exiled but I’m *not!*” he took a shaky breath, steeling himself over, “I’m just... I’m mad that I was exiled and immediately forgotten! I’m mad that I was exiled and you all forgot I existed!”

There was silence, and for a moment they thought he was done.

“I’m not angry about exile,” he smiled, shaking his head, “I’m just angry that no one else is.”

Jack blanched, a look of horror passing over his face. As the others awkwardly sat in the aftermath of the teen’s outburst, he gripped his head with his hands, eyes wide. The sickly feeling that had been stewing inside of him tried to make itself known again, and he hastily swallowed it back down with bile. He glanced over at the teen who had gone back to staring at the screen, heart thumping loudly in his chest.

Rows ahead, Ranboo was quietly swelling with both sadness and pride. He was so ecstatic over the fact that Tommy had said something, barely able to contain himself. Because the truth was that no matter how nice he played or how agreeable he was, at the end of the day Ranboo never forgot. And he would never forget what exile had done to Tommy. He would never forget that he’d been the only one to make an effort despite knowing the guy for a day. It hurt, of course. He hated the idea of Tommy being that angry, that done with everyone and everything, but by god was it needed. Tommy deserved to have people angry on his behalf. He was always willing to fight for others but no one was ever willing to fight for him. He was entitled to his anger.

**Waves crashed against the shore, and from inside the little wooden structure, Mushroom Henry was staring at the two figures worriedly.**

**Dream stared down at him, quietly and unreadable.**

**“Tell you what,” the masked man sighed, “just for tonight, I’ll stay.”**



*Don't.* Tubbo thought immediately, *Get away from him. Stay away.*

**Tommy looked up, eyes wide. A small but hopeful smile grew on his face. “Really?” He asked.**

Puffy's heart broke in two at the hope in his expression, feeling tears prick at her eyes. She could barely stand the sight, barely stand seeing Dream wrap his grimy hands around the boy. Tommy was so *desperate* to not be alone. He was just a kid, being beaten and abused by the only source of human contact he had. She tried to swallow the sick feeling in her throat.

**“Just tonight,” Dream affirmed, “I know it’s breaking the rules of your exile cause, y’know Tubbo *wants* you to be alone, but I’ll make one exception. As long as you don’t tell anyone.” He smirked down at the kid.**

Tubbo grit his teeth at that, face contorting into a snarl. The *last* thing he'd wanted was for Tommy to be alone. Dream was spouting bullshit, and it made him furious.

**“Of course not!” Tommy shook his head, “I won’t tell anyone, I won’t!”**

**Dream laughed quietly, putting a hand on Tommy’s shoulder. “It’ll be our little secret, yeah?”**

**The screen faded to black.**

Techno pursed his lips, looking away. There was an unfamiliar sort of... sad anger in him. He wasn't sure why, as he'd been quite strict with himself that he wasn't to care for his younger brother anymore. He'd told himself to cut all ties, never bother himself with the kid who'd left him in the dust again.

But maybe that wasn't quite how caring about someone worked.

What he *did* know, however, was that Dream was a bastard. He didn't need to give two shits about Tommy to see that. The guy was a sleaze, preying on a fucking kid because of some sick ego and control issues.

Tommy was silent, his outburst had taken a lot out of him. Honestly? He just wanted to sleep. He didn't have any energy left to engage with stupid comments or angry people. He was just... Done.

Whatever, he'd tune them out. The bunch of pussies were acting like it was the end of the world. He scoffed, rolling his eyes and resting his chin on his knees.

Shit hadn't even started. This was the easy part.

# Before the World was big

## Chapter Summary

exile ft. The Sapnap Visit and clingyduo issues.

TRIGGER WARNINGS: physical verbal and psychological abuse. suicidal thoughts and discussion of suicide in general.

“Okay,” Quackity began, standing from his seat., “I can’t take it anymore.” He unzipped his sports jacket, shedding it and letting out a large sigh. His tan arms were brandished in lightened scars from battle, and there was a thin sheen of sweat covering his face.

“I’m fucking *boiling*. ” He hissed, throwing his beanie to the ground. “Don’t you guys think it’s hot in here?”

“I’m pretty comfortable actually.” Sapnap shrugged nonchalantly. Quackity paused to glare at his fiance.

“Anyone else?” He asked.

“I think it’s nice in here.” Technoblade hummed. The duck hybrid’s eye twitched as he sighed deeply.

“Okay, does anyone that *doesn’t* come from the Nether think it’s hot in here?” Quackity muttered, shooting scathing looks at both hot-blooded hybrids.

“It’s awful in here.” Tubbo affirmed, wiping at the sweat on his brow.

“I’m about to shave all this off.” Puffy whined, ruffling her bushy hair.

Gradually, everyone had started to shed their outer layers in the heat, until even Quackity, who rarely removed his jacket and beanie, was throwing things to the ground in a fit.

“Are you *trying* to cook us?” Fundy questioned, looking up at the ceiling.

“Mind your own business.” Drista replied back, voice devoid of emotion.

“You could bake brownies in here.” Ranboo mourned quietly, his suit jacket discarded by his feet, earning a snort from Karl, who had ditched his large hoodie.

“Like when you crack an egg on the sidewalk and it cooks.” Sam groaned, “except *we’re* the stupid eggs.” His mask had been thrown to the side to let his face breathe, crown also discarded along with his large coat.

“Jack, Tommy, how are you alive in those things?” Puffy asked, staring at their outfits with wide eyes. Both teens looked over at one another, noticing the opposing’s thick sweaters. Jack had yet to strip his striped hoodie, looking rather comfortable, while Tommy was burrowed deep into Ranboo’s sweater as if he was *cold*.

“Jesus, boys,” Phil blanched, having shed his large cloak, “take those off before you drop!” He chided. Beside him Technoblade was sitting comfortably, though the fox hybrid on his left was near throwing a fit at the heat.

“I’m quite good actually,” Jack shot him down. He tried to ignore the sinking feeling in his gut of the fact that he and Tommy were in the same boat. He really didn’t want to think about it. Every reminder that he and the boy had something in common felt like a knife to the gut. He didn’t want to be anything like him.

“Same here,” Tommy nodded enthusiastically, “I’m not a whiny baby like you lot.” He jeered.

“It’s like a bajillion degrees in here,” George pointed out, “how on earth are you two just fine?”

“Perhaps I’m just built better.” Tommy mused, “it *would* make sense.”

As many people groaned at the comment, the blond took a moment to purse his lips. He knew exactly why the room was hot, and though it was slightly endearing, it was also rather annoying.

Look, he appreciated Drista’s efforts, he did. He understood that she was completely oblivious to stupid little human emotions and shit, but by god she didn’t have to turn the room into a fucking sauna. He wasn’t sure how to communicate the fact that even if he was launched into a volcano, the chill of death would never leave, without drawing the attention of the other occupants. Thankfully, one Jack Manifold helped divert some of that attention, as he was also in the same predicament it seemed.

Tommy wasn’t quite sure how to feel about what he’d recently discovered. The idea of someone else going through what he did... it didn’t make *sense*. He wasn’t by any means trying to say that someone else couldn’t come back, but he didn’t understand *how*. From what Jack had said he hadn’t used the book, which made the whole ordeal all the more confusing.

Not to mention, Tommy had no clue where Jack’s lives had gone and when he’d lost them. Normally word of a life being lost travelled fast, but save for Jack’s first in the Pogtopia vs. Manberg war, he had no idea where the two other lives could have gone or *when* they would have gone. Especially without anyone knowing.

It wasn’t that Tommy didn’t want to believe Jack, it was that he was honestly a bit scared of doing so. His resurrection had been so intimate and violating, the whole process splitting him apart piece by piece over and over again. Death itself had been a horror of its own, and he didn’t think he’d ever forget how it felt.

Which was why it was so difficult for him to believe that someone else, *especially* someone who had made numerous attempts on his life, would suddenly bring up also being a ressurectee the moment Tommy himself became one.

He cared about Jack, he did. He considered the older man to have been one of his best friends, and though things had shifted and he'd lost track of time, that didn't mean he had lost all feeling for him.

The issue was that if Tommy were to actually find someone who had gone through the same thing, to find someone who had felt what he had, he'd be inclined to draw nearer to them. He would feel connected to them in a way the rest of the server could never relate to.

And that was what scared him about Jack claiming to have felt death out of the blue. His former close friend who had devolved into an angry bitter man and tried to kill him, was the person Tommy would be putting that trust in and feeling that connection with.

Forgive him if he was a little weary. Forgive him if he wasn't as patient as he could have been with the man who'd angrily began screaming at him the second he'd set foot in *his hotel* after quite literally going through Hell and back.

He didn't *want* to discredit Manifold, and he didn't *want* to be more selfish than he already had been, but he didn't have time for whatever elaborate scheme the man was planning, nor did he have the energy.

Seeing Jack sitting there, however, still wrapped comfortably in his large blue and black sweater, left a sour taste in Tommy's mouth.

They *were* one in the same; the only ones who understood each other.

He didn't like it. He pressed his mouth into a thin line, looking away. If Jack had truly died and come back then why had he been so angry when Tommy had done the same? If they were in the same boat why was the older man trying to sink them both in an attempt to flood Tommy's side of it?

He didn't understand but the whole thing felt wrong.

He'd never understood why Jack was so upset with him, but he'd learned to move on quickly. At a certain point when it's more normal to be hated by others than loved by them, you learn to get over it.

Maybe people just didn't like him because he was deserving of it.

Whatever, resurrected buddies or not, Jack had made it *quite* clear that he was no fan of Tommy's, and the blond wouldn't waste time trying to understand it. He had to cut his losses and focus on what few people he had left. His money was on Puffy and whatever the hell Quackity and his gaggle of morons had going on. They seemed to like him at least.

Of course there *was* Phil. His father who had been a quiet mess, ruined by what he'd seen. Tommy wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt but he just wasn't sure yet. He knew Puffy would tell him to be patient, to keep the man at arm's length after everything he'd put him through, but Tommy was so desperate for any friends or family he'd take what he could get.

There was no doubt Ranboo, but it was... complicated. Because to discuss Ranboo you had to discuss his other half, and Tommy did *not* have said half on his side. Tubbo had made it quite clear that they weren't friends. Which meant that he and Ranboo couldn't be friends.

But that was okay. Because he still had... well he still had a couple people. Hopefully they'd patronize him enough for him to not die of loneliness or worse, go crawling back to his only other friend.

Whatever. Niki and Jack were off the list. Sam, that vile warden, was off the list. Technoblade had made it evident he didn't want to be anywhere near the list. And Fundy... well who really knew what the fuck was going on with Fundy.

It was fine, though. As long as he had maybe one or two people, he'd be okay. He could do it. Maybe if nothing worked out he could go and pretend to be possessed by that god awful egg. It didn't look particularly *enjoyable* per say but at least there was a sense of community there.

Yeah... he could do that. If after all these memories no one wanted to stick around, which seemed very likely, he could always fallback on that stupid cult.

And if that didn't work out either... well...

:)

As long as he wasn't alone... right?

Tommy was abruptly drawn away from his thoughts as the screen started back up again, garnering everyone's attention and bringing all conversations to a close.

**Tommy was curled tightly on his side on the bed inside his little tent. There was a thin blanket draped over his form as he shook and shivered in his sleep, brows drawn into an uncomfortable grimace. The wind nearly blew the structure down each time it came over, causing the boy to whine quietly as he slept.**

**The sun was peeking over the horizon, a thin layer of frost coating everything on the beach.**

Puffy's heart broke at the sight of the little boy so clearly freezing in his sleep. The tent really didn't do anything to protect from the cold.

"I thought a beach would be warmer..." Quackity whispered.

"You'd think hm?" Tommy replied, eyeing them all up. Maybe they wouldn't have had to guess if they'd actually bothered to stick around and feel the cold firsthand.

**"Tommy!" Dream cried excitedly, silhouette suddenly showing through the thin fabric of the tent, "Tommy wake up!"**



**Tommy gasped, eyes shooting open as he rocketed into a sitting position. He shied from the light, covering his face with his forearms and wincing.**

Tubbo's grip on the armrest tightened, glaring up at the screen. Beside him Ranboo steadied himself, trying to keep calm at the sight of just how scared Tommy was.

**"Rise and shine!" Dream declared loudly, mock-knocking on the wooden posts. He stepped in, having to duck to fit inside. He stood crouched, emotionless mask looming over the teen in bed. The latter shook, shying away and making him frown, tilting his head as though he was disappointed. "Oh come on Tommy," he rolled his eyes, "don't be like that."**

Phil's lips pursed, wings fluttering with anger. Dream phrased it as if Tommy was being dramatic, as if Tommy didn't have every right to be scared for his life. He clenched his fists, focusing on the fact that Tommy was in the room and that he was safe.

**"D-Dream...?" Tommy muttered, lowering his arms. "What time is it?"**

**"I know I know," Dream laughed, throwing his hands in the air, "it's early, huh?" He stepped back, holding open the flap of the tent and gesturing for Tommy to come with. "But I come bearing good news!"**

"This has all been some god-awful nightmare?" Fundy snarked, staring bitterly. Niki huffed out a quiet laugh.

**Curiously, Tommy swallowed back his fear, moving out and wincing as the sun hit his face head-on. His eyes had grown slightly duller, cheeks more sunken in.**

Techno frowned, trying to avoid the sinking feeling in his stomach. The sight was all too familiar.

**Dream was standing silently beside a hole in the ground, mask hiding his face as always. “Well?” He grinned, gesturing down at the pit. “You know the drill.”**

“I’m gonna fucking kill him.” Quackity seethed, eyes practically red with rage. Sapnap and George were shifting uncomfortably.

**Tommy frowned, shoulders hunching. “Please don’t...” He whispered, hugging himself.**

**The air shifted, and Dream tilted his head down, a shadow covering part of his mask. Tommy stepped back, hands coming up on instinct before he forced them back down.**

Sam tried to hold back the visceral reaction seeing the boy do that gave him. He tensed, clawed hands terse.

**“Tommy,” Dream sighed, slumping, “why do you *always* fight me on this?” There was a slight wilt in his tone, as though he was sad, “you know this is how it goes, and you know I don’t want to do it either.”**

Tommy stared at the screen with wide glassy eyes. His chest was tight, as though he was being drawn to the display on screen. His leg bounced restlessly.

**Tommy looked down at the hole in the ground, feeling something swirling around in his stomach. He steeled himself over, glaring up at the masked man.**

**“Dream I told you.” He muttered coolly, “I. Don’t. Want. To. Do. This.”**

*Idiot.* He thought quietly to himself.

The others, however, seemed to bloom slightly at the defiance.

**There was a tense silence as the two stared each other down, Tommy holding his ground with clenched fists and a spark in his eye. It seemed to stretch on for hours as the sun rose.**

**“Fine.” Dream sighed, taking a step back. Tommy perked up, eyeing him wearily.**

**Without so much of a warning, the blond was dragged to the ground, a large hand gripping fistfuls of his hair. He let out a cry, falling to his knees as they dug into the ground painfully. Dream knelt down, bringing his face close.**

Tommy had to whip his head to the side, clenching his eyes shut and digging his nails into his skin. *Don't be a pussy. It already happened. You've had worse. They've seen Dream and Wilbur do this before. It's not any more embarrassing than the last time.*

Niki went pale at the extreme act of violence, gripping Jack's terrifyingly cold and clammy hand. She bit her tongue, trying to keep her reaction to a minimum but feeling tears prick at her eyes all the same.

Phil let out a pained groan, quietly pushing back tears. It was one thing to see his son be hurt like that knowing he'd been on a completely different server at the time, but knowing he'd been *at his home* on the same server as Tommy while it all went down... he could barely stomach it. Had he really let his house arrest keep him from keeping his youngest safe? Had he really just assumed Tommy would reach out if he needed help?

**“You think that's how this works?” He growled, “You think you just *get* to say no?” He laughed quietly to himself, “This is your punishment, Tommy! This is happening for a reason!”**

Tubbo's body seized at the words. He tried to control his breathing, unable to even form a real reaction, unable to even process what was really going on.

**Tommy whimpered, holding back tears as he grit his teeth. Dream gripped his hair tighter, raising Tommy's head and slamming it down into the dirt. The teen let out a pained cry, trying to shield his eyes from debris on the ground.**

Karl reared back, shutting his eyes tight and swallowing back bile. His eyes momentarily crossed over to Tommy, wondering how on earth the boy was keeping his cool. He saw the blonde's eyes clenched shut and chest heaving and felt a small part of him break.

Puffy's hands itched at the sight on the screen. She was a woman who used words but at that moment there wasn't a single word that could've accurately described the combined shame, agony, and rage she felt.

**“And then you go ahead and make *me* the bad guy!” Dream cried out incredulously, “I don’t want to do this Tommy! It feels like *I’m* the one being punished!”**

Fundy bared his teeth at the screen, feeling an ugly rage bubbling inside of him. Tommy was just a *kid*. How could Dream *do that*?

**“I’m sorry!” Tommy yelped, “I’m sorry Dream!”**

**“You don’t get it!” Dream snarled, “If you were sorry you wouldn’t fight me on it!”**

**“No I mean it!” Tommy sobbed, “I’m sorry I’m sorry!”**

George had to look away, unable to stomach what he was seeing.

Tommy bit down on his tongue in a desperate attempt to stay in the moment, drawing a surplus of blood.

**The masked man sighed, letting go of his hair abruptly. He stood, dusting himself off.**

**“Whatever,” he muttered, “just put your things in the hole I don’t care. You always make things more difficult than they have to be...”**

Jack stared at the screen, the tremors in his hands giving away his apathetic act.

**Wordlessly, Tommy pushed himself up into a sitting position, sniffing quietly to himself. He wiped at his nose with his forearm, staring down at the ground.**

**“I don’t have all day, Tommy.”**

**“S-sorry...” Tommy mumbled, moving to stand on shaky legs. He approached the hole cautiously, staring at it with weary eyes as he threw everything he had inside. Dream watched him carefully, and when the time came, he let the lit match fall.**

**Tommy scrambled back from the explosions, shielding his face with his hands and feeling the heat on his skin. He tried to shake the ringing from his ears, knowing it well.**

Tommy flinched at the noise, trying to keep his reaction minimal. Ranboo looked over, tears pricking at his eyes. It took every last bit of his self-control not to reach out and console the boy, but he knew that wouldn’t help, if anything it would only make things worse.

**“There we go,” Dream smiled, “that wasn’t so hard, hm?”**

*Shut up.* Phil thought, chewing his nails raw, *Shut up and get away from him.*

**Tommy nodded quietly, still staring at the hole with tired eyes.**

**“Anyways you might wanna start getting ready,” the masked man instructed offhandedly, “Sap’s gonna be here in a few hours.”**

Many eyes fell to the man just mentioned on screen, and he paled dramatically. Memories of his visit came flooding back and suddenly he felt violently ill, having to wrench his hand

from Karl's grip as his skin began to heat up.

**Instantly, Tommy's face lit up, and it was as if the past fifteen minutes had never happened. He smiled wide, eyes shining as he stood.**

**"Sapnap's coming?" Tommy grinned, "To visit me?"**

Sapnap nearly broke down into tears right there. The excitement in Tommy's tone was like a knife to his heart. How had he not realized anything was wrong? How had he *laughed*?

**"That's right," Dream chuckled, losing some of the tension in his shoulders, "that was my big news! I pulled a couple of strings, moved things around, and got him to agree to come and see you."**

That wasn't true. That wasn't fucking true. Sapnap had asked of his own fucking volition to visit Tommy. Sure, some of it had been just general curiosity about exile, but Dream had no right phrasing it like he'd had to beg.

**The younger was practically bouncing on his feet, a certain joy in his stance that hadn't been there in quite some time. In his mind he was going over things he could discuss with Sapnap, things he could show the man. He wanted to figure out how to make the man want to come back.**

**"I know how rough things have been, Tommy," Dream began sympathetically, "and I wanted to make sure you still had someone other than me to talk to, y'know?"**

*Liar.* Ranboo glared silently at the screen. If Dream actually wanted Tommy to feel less alone he wouldn't have brought someone he could easily convince everything was fine. If Dream actually wanted Tommy to be happy in any way he wouldn't have been there in the first place.

**"Thank you Dream," Tommy whispered, misty-eyed, "*thank you.*"**

Sapnap frowned sadly, taking a deep breath.

**“Now don’t get sappy on me!” Dream laughed, “go on! Get ready!”**

**Tommy beamed as the screen went dark.**

“Tommy...” Puffy began quietly, a gentleness to her tone she’d been working on.

“Not a fucking word.” Tommy growled out.

“But Tommy we need to talk about this-”

“No we don’t!” He hissed, “I’m done with it! It’s behind me! I’m not ever gonna fucking talk about it again!”

Puffy frowned, leaning over to get a better look at him; to get a better look at the stiffness in his shoulders and the tremors in his hands. “You can’t just be done with it, Tommy. You-”

“Well, I am!” Tommy cried out, throwing his arms up, “So piss off!”

Phil stared sadly, unsure of what to say. Did he even have the right to say anything? He hadn’t been there before or after, what gave him the right to talk as though he had? Regardless of the fact that Tommy was his boy he hadn’t been there.

Techno looked over, frowning. “You were literally on house arrest, Phil.” He said gruffly, “This isn’t your fault. You couldn’t have been there.”

Phil gazed over, pursing his lips.

“But you could have.”

Technoblade blinked in surprise at the response, wondering if he’d heard wrong. “What?”

“You could have been there, Tech.” Phil whispered hollowly, staring at the ground. Tommy watched with wide eyes, not expecting those words from his father, well, ever.

“He didn’t want to see me,” the elder sibling tried, “I didn’t know-”

*“He’s your brother!”* Phil hissed, a venom in his tone that Technoblade had never heard directed at himself. He blanched, lips parting just barely in shock as his pointed ears flattened. For a moment, he was taken aback, but he steeled himself over almost instantly.

“Is he?” He countered, frowning deeply, a tired look in his eye. The intrigue and ounce of hope drained from Tommy’s face at the words, and he stared with wide eyes. Phil swallowed thickly, trying to keep his emotions under wraps.

“...What?”

“Is he really my brother?” Techno began, “Wilbur’s my brother because we were twins. You’re my dad because you raised me. I don’t *know* Tommy, I barely ever did.”

Tommy’s brows drew together as if the words physically pained him. Two seats over, Tubbo was about two seconds from turning tail and jumping the piglin hybrid, brimming with barely contained rage.

“Tech-”



“He *used* me for weapons and strength, he *betrayed* me and *left* me for people who’d already turned their backs on him! What family would do that?”

Phil stared at his eldest, and suddenly he didn’t even *recognize* him. Was that a son or the people who’d come before him? Was that his boy or the accumulation of hundreds of jaded bitter conceited souls? He didn’t know anymore.

“You left him first.” Puffy spoke up quietly, drawing most of the room’s attention to her. Techno stared her up and down from across the room.

“I didn’t have a choice.” He countered, “I did that *for* Tommy.”

“...did you ever consider that I had no choice either?” Tommy muttered quietly, voice barely raising above a whisper. All eyes fell on him and he frowned.

“What?” Technoblade pressed, face creased with confusion.

“It’s nothing.” Tommy rolled his eyes, “If it’s important or deeply upsetting it’ll be in this god-awful slideshow, we should leave it at that, right?” He glared at the piglin hybrid, “Otherwise we might end up saying things we regret.”

Techno pursed his lips, watching as Tommy wordlessly turned back to the screen. He could feel Phil’s eyes on him, but when he turned his head his father was staring ahead. He frowned.

The screen started back up again.

**A group of four paraded through the Nether, all somewhat bunched together. They traversed small rickety paths balanced over the pits and pools of lava, treating it as if it were nothing.**

**Tommy took a shuddery breath, struggling to exhale. He'd always hated how hard it was to breathe in the Nether. The mucky humid feeling of a much too hot day was amplified by thousands, and the thick air invaded your lungs like a disease, making each breath a conscious effort.**

“Why do you look so damn uncomfortable?” Quackity asked, “Like your socks are wet or something.”

“I hate the Nether.” Tommy muttered, “It fuckin sucks.”

“Rude...” Sapnap and Techno said as one.

**Behind him, Sapnap, Dream, and Ghostbur were chatting happily. About what, he had no clue, but he didn't really care. His eye was on the little platform ahead. He slowed his pace slightly, allowing the others to catch up to him somewhat.**

“What would you do if I went through the portal?” He asked, staring up at Dream.

**“I would kill you.” The man replied without hesitation, tone light and jovial. Beside him Sapnap smiled awkwardly, unsure how to react to the change in subject. Tommy didn't bat an eye at the threat, still nodding his head.**

A couple of glances were sent Sapnap's way and he grimaced, rubbing his hands together anxiously.

Ranboo glared at the screen, clawed hands curling in on themselves.

**“And if I snuck through while you were away?”**

**“I would find out and I would kill you.”**

**“Dream that’s a little...” Sapnap trailed off, unable to finish his sentence but trying to communicate how uncomfortable he was.**

Sapnap hadn’t even remember saying that, so it came as a small relief that his past self had *some* common sense.

**“Don’t worry Sap,” Dream rolled his eyes, kicking a tiny magma cube into the lava, grinning as Tommy let out a tiny sad gasp as he watched it fly down, “this how we *avoid* that happening. I’m just teaching Tommy the rules. And when we follow the rules we...?” He trailed off, voice going a bit higher as though he was expecting something. Tommy rolled his eyes.**

**“...Avoid consequences.” Tommy finished the sentence, muttering quietly to himself as he crossed his arms bitterly. Sapnap raised a brow, speeding his walk so he was closer to the blond.**

“It’s like The Manipulation Classroom or something. Jesus Christ.” Fundy commented, hand on his chin as he leant forward, staring intrigued. Tommy laughed, despite all the glares that the fox got trying to tell him it was an insensitive joke.

**“Dude he’s like, got you completely brainwashed,” he mumbled, “we need to get you to lay loose; get away from Mr. Rulebook over there, y’know?” He grinned, clapping Tommy on the shoulder.**

*And yet no one ever did get me away from him,* Tommy thought silently. He’d had to do that part himself.

**They crossed over another precarious ledge, Ghostbur doing happy flips in the air as he talked Dream’s ear off about the baby ducks he’d watched cross the prime path earlier that day.**

**Eventually, they reached the tiny hub, and Tommy's eyes lit up at the portal. He glanced back at Dream, who was standing a few feet behind as if he was calculating if he could make it without being caught.**

**If he listened hard enough he could hear the sound of the other side.**

**"Hey, Tommy!" Sapnap cried excitedly, "Look! Look!"**

Sapnap went white as a sheet, eyes widening. He remembered that well, but with context on how Tommy had been living, it was no longer the funny joke he'd thought it was.

**Tommy looked over, watching as the blaze hybrid jumped into the portal with a smile on his face.**

**"Are you jealous?" He teased, right before fading away in the purple swirls. Ghostbur followed suit, and Tommy's hand itched at his side, tears welling up in his eyes as Dream began to laugh behind him.**

"Tommy..." Sapnap began, trying to hold back tears, "Tommy I'm so sorry I- I didn't know. I-"

"I know Sapnap, jeez." Tommy rolled his eyes, "you're too much of a pussy to do something like that on purpose. Real dickhead move though." He huffed out a laugh.

No one else laughed, however.

"Not. Cool." Was all Ranboo said, but the way his leg bounced impatiently made it evident he had *much* more to say and was holding back. Sapnap shrank inwards on himself, frowning deeply with shame.

"You really shouldn't have done that..." George frowned.

“That was really harsh,” Puffy nodded along, “how did you not see-”

“Lay off him will you?” Tommy’s brow furrowed, “what the fuck’s harassing him gonna do?” He scoffed, “It’s not like there weren’t others who visited me when things were even worse and didn’t care.”

Sapnap stared with wide eyes, as did Niki.

“But Tommy he shouldn’t have-”

“He didn’t mean to, yeah?” Tommy tilted his head, “he didn’t know and he trusted Dream. There’s no one to actually be mad at other than Dream, right?”

Puffy blinked, taken aback at the statement. There she’d been thinking Tommy would be jumping at the chance to berate Sapnap, vindictive glory and all, but instead, he was berating *them*.

They were all surprised by his words, actually.

“Tommy I...” Sapnap trailed off, staring at the boy.

“Shove it.” Tommy hissed, “Just cause I’m not bloody pissed with you doesn’t mean we’re ‘friends’ *Sapnap*.” He mocked, saying the elder’s name in that weird mimicking tone he always used when they were joking around. The truth was that he was *tired*. He was tired of being angry and blaming everyone for every little thing. Somewhere between life and death and life again he’d realized he just... didn’t care as much as he’d used to. Everything felt duller, and not as worth it.

Sapnap smiled softly.

**They were fucking mocking him.**

**It was humiliating.**

**As Dream jumped in as well, assuring Tommy he'd be right back, the blond felt a piece of him shatter.**

**What was the point?**

**He sighed, slouching. He could hear their muffled laughter and cries from the other side, no doubt having the time of their lives. He moved over to the side of the ledge, staring down at the lava.**

The smile immediately slipped from his face as he straightened, eyes wide. He could feel the unanimous intake of breath as everyone leaned forwards on the edge of their seat, too shocked for words but hoping they were merely being tricked by the screen.

*No no no no no no....* If that had been happening he would have *known*. He was just meters away he would have noticed.

Phil's heart stopped. He choked on air, not believing his eyes. Beside him, Techno let out a quiet but stressed exhale.

Tommy didn't look the least bit perturbed, only staring with a dead look in his eye.

**Why was he even trying? Tubbo didn't care about him. Quackity and Fundy didn't care about him. Techno and Phil didn't care about him. What was he even doing? Who was he trying to prove a point to by forcing himself through hell?**

**His brows creased together, as though he were in pain, as he stared down, mesmerized by the magma. His lungs filled up with that thick molten air, and he smiled sadly.**

**Maybe it was his best option.**

Tubbo froze as he watched. Memories of the tower he'd found flooded his mind. Memories of thinking Tommy was dead, of thinking Tommy had *jumped*.

Once finding out that Tommy had actually escaped exile and was very much alive, he had pushed it to the side. He'd sort of just decided that it had been a decoy of sorts without ever really asking Tommy if that was true.

It wasn't, apparently.

Tommy had wanted to jump many times before that, it seemed, and Tubbo was finding it difficult to breathe.

*He couldn't breathe.*

**Before he could contemplate it any further, however, a hand gripped his shoulder tightly. He looked up to the side and saw Dream's emotionless mask facing him. Sapnap and Ghostbur were still yelling in the overworld, laughs so quiet he could barely hear them.**

**"It's not your time to die yet, Tommy." Dream told him, voice firm. Tommy sighed, running a hand through his hair.**

Quackity, who was close to losing his stomach, made a face at the words. The fuck was that supposed to mean? The bastard was acting like- and Oh. Quackity suddenly felt so much sicker, eyes widening at the realization. *Oh*.

**"It's never my time to die..." He whispered quietly.**

**The screen went black.**

Ranboo closed his eyes, finally giving in and letting his tears fall. They burned as they did, and seeing Tommy turn to him with concern in his eyes as he hissed in pain only made them fall harder.

Tommy looked so *small* in the seat next to him, and he could barely contain sobs. He wanted to hold the boy tight and never let go but he couldn't even move, rooted to the spot in shock and horror.

Sapnap dissolved into sobs, burying his face in his hands. The silent hiss of his tears evaporating as they made contact with his burning skin rang throughout the room. He was accustomed to sadness and he was accustomed to rage, but never had they fit so well together in an attempt to make him ache.

His heart twisted as he thought about the fact that he'd *provoked* Tommy. He could barely breathe between sobs, gasping for breath. Tommy had been standing there ready to *jump*. Karl was fretting over him in a panic, unable to touch his scorching skin.

Tommy looked thoroughly disturbed, though not by the screen. He was staring at Sapnap with wide eyes, as if he was confused. He opened his mouth to say something, but was interrupted by the sound of loud cries.

Though they didn't belong to the blaze hybrid.

Tubbo's shoulders shook violently as he sobbed, gripping at his hair with angry hands. His face was contorted into an ugly expression, twisted and in pain. Ranboo was hunched over, trying to tend to the goat hybrid while also wincing at his own pain. Tommy stared, unsure of what exactly was going on. He let it continue for a moment before speaking up.

"What the hell are you crying about?" He blurted out. Instantly, he regretted how crude it had sounded. Everyone turned to stare at him, shocked, as if he'd said something appalling. Tubbo looked up at him, brows furrowed and making a face, as though he couldn't believe what he'd just heard.



“I’m crying over *you!*” He blubbered, tears running down his face in steady streams, “you idiot!”

Tommy blinked, taken aback. His mouth suddenly felt very dry. “...What?”

“*I’m sorry!*” Tubbo managed through his tears, gasping for air and whining loudly, “I’m so sorry Tommy I didn’t mean it I didn’t mean any of it I-” He cut himself off, sobbing loudly into his hands.

The younger teen stared in shock, mouth agape. Tubbo *never* cried. For the life of him he couldn’t understand why something as miniscule as a memory of him staring at the lava had gotten his best friend so worked up.

“Tubbo I-”

“You didn’t deserve it,” Tubbo shook his head, sniffing and crying, “You didn’t deserve it at *all*, Tommy.”

Tommy froze, rooted in his spot, not replying.

“Of course you’re my friend!” The elder teen cried, “You’re my best friend! And I didn’t mean any of it. I’m so sorry Tommy I just...” He paused, meeting eyes with the blonde, “*I can’t ever lose you again...*” He whispered, wiping at his nose. “I- I just got so *mad* when you said all that and I didn’t want to be the first to apologize, but then I had to watch *him* do all those things to you and I-” he gasped for air, eyes widening, “Tommy I can’t lose you again I can’t let any of this ever happen to you again. *Please* don’t ever leave again...”

Silence engulfed the room, only being broken by the sound of the others crying. Tubbo was staring at Tommy, still crying quietly, bottom lip trembling.

Tommy began to laugh.

# we nearly drowned for such a silly thing

## Chapter Summary

your tubbo :)

TRIGGER WARNINGS! sort of derealization? kinda a trippy dream scene, near drowning, panic attacks n i think that's it

*“Tommy I can’t lose you again I can’t let any of this ever happen to you again. Please don’t ever leave again...”*

*Silence engulfed the room, only being broken by the sound of the others crying. Tubbo was staring at Tommy, still crying quietly, bottom lip trembling.*

*Tommy began to laugh.*

---

A chill ran down Tubbo’s spine as he watched. Tommy’s head dipped, a shadow falling over his face as he grinned.

For a moment, the elder teen thought he was being laughed *at*, and was subsequently ready to reenact his rage from earlier, but he quickly realized something was very wrong.

People in the room froze. They’d already been paying attention to the conversation between both Tubbo and Tommy, but the laughter caught them all off guard. They leant forward, confused and a bit concerned for their own safety.

Ranboo thought that if his skin worked like a human’s he would have been paling by the second. He turned to Tommy, frowning deeply and with wide eyes. The youngest was

hunched over, laughter growing louder by the second. Tubbo faltered, trying to process the reaction as the feeling of panic pooled deeper and deeper into his stomach.

Tommy doubled over in his seat, gripping at his hair and gasping for air as he continued to cackle, but he couldn't stop. Tears pricked at his eyes as he continued to laugh but no matter how hard he tried to reign it in he *couldn't*.

Things were fine. Things were fine between him and Tubbo and he'd been dramatic for *nothing*. He'd started creating lists of people he had left and last-ditch plans, all the while his friend had known they'd make up. Tommy had reacted so wildly to the fight, cutting off Tubbo in his mind without another thought. For fuck's sake he'd been ready to go back to *Dream*. His one and only goal was to kill Dream and yet just minutes before he'd been considering crawling back to the man because of a stupid fight with Tubbo. What the hell was wrong with him? Who did that?

His laughs became even more strained, scraping at his throat as they escaped his mouth and causing him to make little choked noises. He could barely feel his arms at that point, staring a hole into the carpet with wide and frantic eyes.

Puffy shot up from her seat, a collected but concerned look in her eyes. The others were watching nervously, and Phil looked about two seconds from getting up himself. Ranboo turned to the blond, holding out tentative hands.

"Tommy you need to breathe," Puffy instructed calmly, kneeling at his side. She kept a safe distance, having picked up on his aversion to touch.

Tommy gasped for air, laughing louder and harder as he pulled at his hair in a desperate attempt to stop the hysterics. Tubbo stared in shock, mouth agape.

Phil reached for Techno's hand without even registering it, clenching it tight with panic as he grit his teeth and watched from afar. Techno made no move to pull away, staring down at his father's hand with pursed lips.

“*Breathe*, Tommy,” Puffy said again, taking exaggerated breaths, “in and out with me. Just one at a time.”

George looked over at his friends, sharing an anxious and perturbed glance. What the hell was going on? Why was Tommy *laughing*? They’d all gone through their fair share of things, but none of them had ever seen a reaction like that.

Another choked and strangled laugh escaped Tommy’s throat as he warbled something incomprehensible. Ranboo felt a presence behind him and saw Tubbo leaning in further, terrified but needing to be near his friend.

“That’s it,” Puffy nodded, still breathing deeply, “take your time. Take it slow, it’s okay.”

Slowly, his laughter began to settle, as he focused heavily on breathing, locking eyes with Puffy and trying to follow her breaths. She was smiling softly, nodding encouragingly as they went through the motions together.

Ranboo frowned sadly. His hands itched to reach out and console Tommy, but instead he found them wrapped around his husband's arm, locked in a panicked grip.

“You’re doing so good, Tommy.” Puffy beamed, and Tommy was lucid enough to make a face at the sweet tone, causing her to laugh quietly. “Can I touch you?”

He backed away, shaking his head.

“That’s okay, don’t worry.” She hummed, “Just focus on breathing, okay?”

Their conversation had become much more hushed, and almost no one could hear them. The people in the room looked away, giving the boy privacy, half of their own accord and half because everyone else was doing it.

Tubbo's nails were digging into Ranboo's shoulder as he leant over, shaggy hair being pushed to the side so he could fully see Tommy. He was chewing anxiously on the inside of his mouth, brows furrowed.

Finally, after what felt like many painful hours, Tommy was calm enough that they could relent to a degree. He slumped in his seat, taking deep wavering breaths. Tubbo and Ranboo alike felt relief wash over them, tension releasing from their bodies.

Tubbo leaned back, thumping his head against the headrest of his chair. Phil let Techno's hand go almost immediately, craning his neck up to see his son over the rows of seats.

Tommy was quiet, staring at the ground, contemplating. He scowled, wiping at his nose with the back of his arm as Puffy returned to her seat after assuring herself he was okay. His face was quickly growing red with both anger and embarrassment, fists clenched at his side.

An awkward silence fell over the room, the others scared of being insensitive and breaking it. They looked around at each other, unsure of what they should do or how to move on.

How *could* they move on after that? They'd seen it. They'd watched Tommy stand before the lava with a greying look in his eyes, they'd seen him truly mull it over. Not only that but Tubbo's passionate and heartfelt apology had been met with full on hysterics.

That was... I mean... how do you just move on from that?

"So..." Karl began quietly, sweating nervously, "women, am I right?" He offered, hoping to appeal to the blond with a shaky smile.

The people in the room all blanched, worried it would come off as rude or just not land at all.

But then a ghost of a smile appeared on Tommy's face, and the cloudy look in his eyes dissipated. For a split second, it was quiet, and then he erupted into laughter, making Karl grin wide.

Tension in the room eased, and as amble chatter broke out, Tommy seemed to calm immensely. His knee was still bouncing up and down rapidly, and he looked to be on edge, but it was better than before.

Ranboo relaxed into his seat, smiling softly at the blond who was completely oblivious and had turned around in his seat to babble on back and forth angrily with George and Quackity. He felt his heart squeeze a bit at the sight and had to take a moment to breathe, holding back tears.

That could have been him. Everything he'd seen on the screen of exile, *it could have been him*. Tommy could have easily thrown him under the bus. It was a lighthearted prank gone too far and he was the new guy. There was no reason for Tommy *not* to rat him out.

He felt his chest seize at the realization that Tommy had saved him from so much more than just exile. There was no telling where he would have ended up if he'd been the one under Dream's thumb. He could have been dead, or locked in prison, or barely holding it together and *alone*. He could have never developed the bond he had with Tubbo, never found Michael.

It all hit him at once, and he brought a panicked hand to his heart, sucking in a sharp breath. He had always been very aware that each decision mattered, that tiny things had big impacts, and that one decision could forever change his fate, but he'd never really *felt* it until then.

Tommy and Tubbo alike turned to him, concerned at the movement.

"What's wrong?" Tubbo asked, eyes wide. He was looking all over, as if somewhere between the sitting and the sitting and the *sitting*, Ranboo had somehow been injured. The enderman hybrid looked over to his left where Tommy was staring at him and could barely hold back a pained noise.

Tommy's big grey eyes were swimming with concern, and Ranboo's chest hurt even *more* just by looking at them. Tommy was so *good*. He acted like he wasn't, he always acted like he wasn't, but he was. He cared so much and he was so loyal and protective and he *loved* so unbelievably passionately.

And yet so many couldn't see that.

The pain was what brought Ranboo back to full awareness, a sharp burning on his cheeks he knew all too well.

"You're crying!" Tubbo gasped out, growing more panicked, "Stop! Stop!" He quickly pulled out a little cloth from his pocket, one he kept specifically for moments like this, and began to wipe at the tears. He had to get up on his knees to do it, but he was determined.

Ranboo, however, did not stop crying.

Tommy pursed his lips, unsure of what to do or where to move but undeniably worried. His brows creased, making him look like a kicked puppy.

"H-Hey!" he put his hands up, laughing nervously, "what's wrong?"

Ranboo sobbed, and Tubbo let out a frustrated whine, trying his best to dab the tears away as painlessly as he could. Tommy grimaced awkwardly, anxious but not able to truly show it.

"Boo it's okay," Tubbo tried to soothe, "I don't know what's got you upset but it's okay!" He tried, smile wavering. It wasn't that he didn't want to let Ranboo sit in his emotions, but they couldn't afford to let him ever 'cry it out'. Even though it felt mean, Tubbo knew it was important that he did whatever he could to stop the tears as fast as he could.

The enderman hybrid cried loudly, the physical pain making it all the more easier to keep it going.

"Thank you..." He managed quietly, looking at Tommy as vwoops echoed throughout the room, "Thank you so much."



For a moment there was a confused silence.

“...Me?” Tommy blinked, taken aback. “What the hell are you thanking me for?”

Ranboo looked down, tears dripping down onto his hands. Tubbo made a panicked sound, chastising him under his breath and wiping at them as well before tilting his husband’s head back up. The enderman hybrid sighed.

“Exile was so *bad*, Tommy,” he muttered, not missing the way the blond tensed, “a-and it could have just as easily been you *and* me or just me... but you took it head on. I’m... I’m sorry I wasn’t there with you.”

The blond stared at him, not saying a word, and Ranboo was concerned that he’d said something unintentionally very wrong or insensitive or-

“The fuck’s wrong with you?” Tommy tilted his head, “You’re fuckin insane man. Probably the *last* person who has anything to apologize for.” He managed a small laugh, shaking his head.

“B-But I was responsible too! You went through it alone and-”

“Ranboo,” The blond cut him off, and he reared back in shock at the use of his name, no ‘b’ attached at the end or anything, “if I was mad at you, like, genuinely fucking pissed at you, you’d know. If I blamed you for any part of exile, I would fuckin tell you, dude.”

Ranboo stared at him, mouth agape, nose still runny, and eyes still puffy. Tommy wasn’t scowling at him. Tommy wasn’t glaring at him.

It’d been so long since Tommy had been genuine and upfront with him and he *missed it*. He’d wanted to treasure his first friendship on the server, to keep that bond special, but exile had changed things. He’d wanted to get to know Tommy better and become better friends but instead, he’d lost the blond altogether.

“Of course, it doesn’t mean I like you or anything, *Ranboob*,” Tommy grinned, “I still think you’re a complete wrong ‘un.”

“Aaaaand you’ve ruined it.” Tubbo said flatly, pocketing the cloth and sitting back down, still turning his attention to both his friends regularly to ensure they were unchanged and alright. Tommy laughed loudly.

“Bitch.”

“Y’know for a second there I thought you weren’t going to add the last part,” Ranboo hummed, “and then you did. And it was middle school all over again. Mean names and everything.”

Tommy stared at him with a thoroughly disgusted look on his face for a good six seconds before shaking his head with a loud ‘*ugh*’.

“You are so fuckin...” The blond trailed off, muttering quietly to himself.

“Thanks, I get that a lot.” Ranboo nodded to himself and Tommy groaned loudly.

It was at about that moment that the three realized they had an audience. Apparently, Ranboo’s little dramatics had brought all the other conversations to a stop, and the other people in the room had been watching the entire thing.

The trio stared at the many sets of eyes staring back at them in silence.

“Nosy assholes...” Tommy muttered, effectively causing the room to break out into loud passionate banter.

For a second, despite everything that had just happened, everything felt a bit more normal. The arguments were more lighthearted than they'd been in a long time, and though everyone was clearly trying to avoid the elephant in the room, it was almost nice.

And then that dreaded screen flickered to life.

Tommy's eyes widened as he looked over at Tubbo, slightly concerned.

"Wait but we didn't- like I didn't-"

"It's fine," Tubbo shrugged, "apology accepted." He smiled nonchalantly.

"No." Tommy hissed, eyes narrowed, "the fuck's wrong with you? I didn't even apologize yet!"

"Yet." The older teen nodded, "See you're going to. So it's fine."

"Absolutely not," the blond shook his head, "we're talking after this. And that's a fuckin threat." He didn't know if his friend was doing it to make up for the... incident he'd just had or what, but he wasn't letting it fly. Tubbo had too much of a tendency to let things go without proper apologies or amends. Stupid fucking guy was so focused on moving forward he didn't see how much the habit was holding him back.

Tubbo only grinned, relenting. And that was it.

**It was nearing dusk on the little beach, the sun saying its goodbyes as it tinted the skies orange. The water lapped at the shores, dragging the grains of sand back and forth and back and forth as it did.**

**Tommy walked down the little dirt path he'd made, following an excited Ghostbur.**

Recognition flashed in Tommy's eyes. He knew the memory well, looking over at Tubbo who was distracted by the screen and feeling something pinch at his chest.

Phil smiled sadly at the little ghost. He'd never been the most... accepting of Ghostbur, as he really just saw him as some 'fake Wilbur', but ever since seeing what 'real Wilbur' had been like the fake seemed all the more endearing.

Maybe Phil was just a shit parent. His eldest was impassive towards almost everyone, even in the face of gruesome death, his middle child was dead and replaced by a spacey ghost, and his youngest... *god his youngest...*

**"Come come come come!" Ghostbur motioned quickly, forcing the blond to hurry his pace.**

**The two made their way inside the logged area before traveling further into Ghostbur's quarters. The ghost was grinning happily, and would have been jumping for joy if he didn't float. Tommy seemed slightly amused at his antics.**

**"So I was thinking," Ghostbur began, rummaging through a chest, "what else does Tommy like? What does Tommyinnit- What's he a fan of?"**

Normally, that was where someone like Technoblade, Jack, or Niki would have chimed in with a pointed remark, but there was only silence. The three of them had actually been unusually quiet, and it was beginning to become offputting.

**The boy in question smirked, crossing his arms. He was battered and bruised, clothes dirty and ripped, and hair a mess of tangles.**

**"He likes democracy,"**

**Tommy made a face.**

Quackity laughed loudly at that, as did a couple of others, albeit quieter than him.

“Why is *democracy* the first thing he can think of!?” He cried, amused.

“Probably cause I was such a badass politician,” Tommy shrugged, a small grin growing on his face, “bet he remembers me totally kicking ass in the courtroom.”

Karl and Quackity shared a glance.

“Hey Tommy, remember when you tried to bribe me? And still basically lost?” Karl smiled coyly, holding back a laugh.

Tommy glared back at the two as they began to laugh. “Fuck you!” He cried.

**“-oh! Your shirt looks a little...” Ghostbur trailed off, pausing in his search to look at the boy. Tommy frowned, looking down.**

**“Yeah...” He admitted, unenthused, “I’ve had a rough couple of nights you could say.”**

“Understatement of the fucking century.” Fundy piped up, making the tips of Tommy’s ears go red.

“Does anyone know why he’s here?” Techno asked, jabbing a thumb in his direction.

*“What the hell!?”*

**“That’s okay,” the shell of Wilbur Soot smiled emptily, “come stand over here.” He turned back to the chest, missing the sad look Tommy gave him.**

Puffy frowned at the screen. She knew that look. He was grieving. She couldn’t imagine how it felt to be constantly followed around by the ghost of your own brother and abuser. Especially such a happy empty shell of who he once was, oblivious to everything he’d put you through.

Tommy sighed at the screen. *I miss Wilbur.*

**“I want you to get ready for this gift 'cause you’re gonna like it a lot,” he grinned excitedly.**

**“I’m ready.” Tommy gave a halfhearted smile.**

Tubbo leaned in slightly closer, wondering if it was what he thought it was.

**“So basically I thought; What does Tommy like? His favourite thing in the whole wide world,” From behind his back, Ghostbur revealed an enchanted compass with the words *Your Tubbo* engraved on the side, placing it around Tommy’s neck gently, “is Tubbo!”**

Everyone was quiet, watching with bated breath and wondering what the blond’s reaction would be. A general assumption could have been anger, but from Tommy’s inner turmoil thus far he *seemed* to have been more mad with himself than he was with Tubbo. Apathy was another big guess. Tommy seemed so dull then it would have made sense for him to just not care.

**Tommy was silent, picking it up with his own hands and inspecting it with a forlorn look on his face. His eyes were misty, and for a second the familiar spark that he’d long since lost was reignited.**

**“Tommy I know you really really like Tubbo, and I know you really really miss him. So I went out of my way and I made you this!” The ghost was giddy once again, “It points you in the direction of Tubbo at all times!”**

Ranboo smiled softly, feeling his heart warm at the memory. That was undeniably endearing, and he already knew both Tommy and Tubbo would have been floored by the gesture.

**The blond stared up at Ghostbur, stars in his eyes. His thumb traced against the words lightly, back and forth, as though he couldn’t believe it.**

Tommy could feel the lettering on his chest, and he took a deep breath.

**“No matter where you are on this bitch of an earth,” Ghostbur smiled, “you’ll know exactly where Tubbo is... and I thought you’d really really appreciate that.”**

**Tommy still said nothing, staring back down at the compass as his eyes flitted all across it, inspecting every little detail. He pressed it close to his chest, closing his eyes.**

**“Thank you.” He murmured, an unusual genuinity in his tone.**

Tubbo clenched his eyes tight, grimacing at the words. The words of gratitude were so soft-spoken and sweet, it made his heart ache.

**“Of course!” Ghostbur chirped happily, clasping his hands together, “But I really must be going now, Tommy. I hope you don’t mind.”**

**Tommy shook his head, swallowing thickly and still looking down at the compass. He barely even registered his ghost brother leaving.**

**He left the structure, and it was night. The moon hung low, still rising. It was a half moon, shining down on him and casting his shadow tall against the sand. He paid no**

**mind, however, moving slowly along towards his tent.**

**When he got there, he stepped inside carefully, kneeling beside his ender chest. He shuffled some things around before gently removing the compass from his neck and placing it down. He grinned softly, staring inside with a fond expression.**

**“Right beside the discs.” He smiled.**

**The screen went dark.**

Tubbo stared with wide eyes at the screen, leaning so far forwards he was nearly falling out of his seat. As soon as the memory ended he looked over to his friend.

“Tommy...” He began quietly, but trailed off as though he was speechless.

*This is why we should have talked before Drista started the stupid thing up again.* Tommy thought bitterly to himself before looking up and locking gazes with his best friend. He thought Tubbo might’ve been weirded out, both by Ghostbur’s phrasing and how Tommy had reacted to the whole thing, but no, Tubbo was *smiling*.

“Y’know I almost cried when I got mine too.” Tubbo laughed quietly, looking down at his hands, and Tommy rubbed the mark in the middle of his chest anxiously, feeling phantom pains.

“I didn’t almost cry!” Tommy hissed, affronted. From behind him he heard snickers and felt the tips of his ears go red.

“Yeah whatever,” Tubbo rolled his eyes, “Anyways, I’m glad to see I wasn’t the only one that little ghost bastard made all mushy.”



And maybe if they hadn't been surrounded by half the server, if it'd been just him and Tubbo, he would have relented and admitted that, yeah, the thing had him near tears. But that wasn't the case.

"He did *not* make me mushy," the blond narrowed his eyes, "I'm a big man I don't *do* 'mushy'."

"And I'm six feet tall." The goat hybrid snorted.

As the two began to bicker, mostly just Tommy making snide remarks and Tubbo offhandedly saying something that only pissed him off more, Ranboo felt a pressure lift from his shoulders. The entire time they'd been fighting he'd been stuck in a constant state of awareness, never able to forget that he was quite literally sitting in the middle of something very personal and heated.

They hadn't actually talked things out, no... but they would! Tubbo had apologized and Tommy would. Sure Tommy had... well something had happened there that not a single one of them was quite ready to address... but it was okay! They weren't fighting anymore, and Tommy had called Ranboo by his name. His actual name.

Things had never looked better for the three of them in his humble opinion.

Of course, later, when everything was said and done, he'd be having a long discussion with Tubbo about why it shouldn't have come as a surprise that the compass was 'disc-tier', but that could wait. Things hadn't been quite right between Tubbo and Tommy since exile, and understandably so, but Ranboo was hoping the memories would clear things up.

Maybe it was a foolish thought, but hey, Ranboo had met Foolish, and the guy seemed to be doing alright, so it'd probably be fine.

***Tommy stood alone in the dark. He was completely still, stuck in a vast expanse of blackness that stretched out in all directions as far as the eye could see. He was in his L'Manberg uniform, the compass fastened tightly around his neck. In his right hand he held a bucket of chum, and in the other a detached hand wearing black fingerless gloves.***

***His knuckles were white around the edges of the bucket, fingertips just barely touching the surface of the contents. He was gripping the detached limb as if he were holding hands with it.***

“What the fuck...?” Quackity muttered, eyes going wide as he peeled back from the screen, unable to take his eyes away from the sight.

“It’s a dream,” Ranboo interjected, looking over to Tommy for confirmation, “I think?”

“Ninety-nine percent sure it was a dream.” The blond nodded confidently, though no one bothered to ask where the one percent had gone. “Maybe like eighty-nine.” No one commented on the missing eleven percent either.

“You’re holding a hand.” George pointed out, staring in subdued disgust.

“Thanks for pointing it out,” Sapnap muttered, “Otherwise I might not have noticed.”

“No I mean-” The man in goggles gestured at the screen, “*you’re holding a hand!*”

“Yeah?” Tommy tilted his head, “it’s a dream, Gogy. Weird shit happens.”

***“Tommy.” A voice called, echoing throughout the nothingness. He turned, looking for the culprit and finding more blank space in its wake. His face was impassive, staring blankly into the distance.***

***“Tommy.” It called again, slightly louder that time. The detached hand began to grip him back, and the fish guts in the bucket began to squirm. When he looked back inside of it he found they’d clumped together into a red sphere. It looked like... a planet.***

Sapnap’s eyes widened, a pit growing in his stomach at the sight.

Jack and Karl alike had to look away, unable to handle the sounds and sight of the guts squishing around.

Techno stared quietly at the screen, scrutinizing everything silently.

*He blinked lazily, taking a few steps forward as if that would take him anywhere. The hand gripped his own hand even tighter. He felt the bucket rattle again, and when he looked down that time he was met with empty blue-green eyes staring emptily into nothingness.*

Puffy gasped loudly, reaching over to cover Tubbo's eyes as Ranboo grabbed the boy's hand. Tommy stared blankly ahead, though he did somewhat grimace.

A chill went throughout the room.

*Tubbo's head was discarded in the bucket, eyes wide open and face expressionless. Tommy reared back, throwing the pail away violently and listening to it as it clattered on some sort of invisible flooring. The head rolled out of the bucket, empty eyes still facing him.*

"I'm tired of seeing my head off my body." Tubbo whispered quietly, clenching his eyes shut and covering his ears. Tommy felt a pang of guilt shoot through his chest.

The others exclaimed loudly, some looking away while others tried to stomach it.

*He gagged, stumbling back a few steps before nearly tripping over his own feet.*

*It was the hand that stopped him from falling. Or, more specifically, the owner of the hand. Where it had once been a detached appendage, the hand was suddenly fused to a body in a green hoodie.*

Everyone tensed at the sight of the man, some of them growing livid within seconds. Tommy squirmed a small bit, rubbing his hands together anxiously and flexing them open and closed.

***“Come on Tommy.” Dream insisted, gripping his hand tight and trying to pull him along.  
“I’ll help you find the exit.”***

***But as he moved, Tommy’s feet stayed rooted in place. He stopped, masked face turning to look at the boy. He leaned in close, gently reaching for the mask and pulling it away.***

***Behind the mask was Wilbur’s face, grinning wide.***

Phil and Niki alike turned their heads sharply away, not willing to relive much more. Techno’s grip on the armrest tightened in just the slightest bit as his ear twitched.

***Tommy let out a choked gasp, trying to pull away, but Wilbur only held onto him tighter.  
The older man tilted his head, still smiling.***

***“Don’t you want our help?”***

Fundy frowned at the sight, digging his clawed hands into his arms as he hugged himself.

**Tommy’s eyes shot open, instantly being flooded with saltwater and burning. He gasped, inhaling copious amounts of water and salt and beginning to heave, only breathing in more water.**

“What’s going on?” Puffy’s eyes widened, as though she was worried they were watching a livestream or something, “what’s happening?”

“Why are you-” Sam squinted at the screen, “Were you *sleeping in the ocean!*?”

Tommy opened his mouth to reply, trying to ignore the fact that he swore to god he could taste the salt again and his throat was closing and it was getting harder to breathe and his eyes stung and- but his eyebrows furrowed instead, unable to really explain what had been happening.

He had never really *known* why he woke up drowning.

Ranboo and Tubbo both looked over at him, as though they had to assure themselves he was physically beside them.

**When his head finally broke the surface of the ocean, he began to hack, thrashing wildly in the current and struggling to stay afloat.**

Phil had to hold himself back as his wings hiked up anxiously. He *knew* Tommy was just a few feet away but he couldn't deny that a large part of his brain was screaming at him that he needed to save the boy.

Jack and Niki shared a confused glance, not sure what to make of the situation.

**He wheezed, choking and panting as he waded towards the shore, eventually washing up on the beach. He laid in the sand, rolling onto his side and coughing up a lung, the salt bringing tears to his eyes, before collapsing down onto his back once more, chest rising and falling heavily.**

Sapnap grimaced at the strain, unable to imagine how it probably felt. It looked fucking *exhausting*.

**He closed his eyes, pretending for just a moment that it was only the ocean water rolling down his cheeks as he struggled for air, mouth unbelievably dry and coppery.**

**The sand had never felt like home, and he much preferred the dirt and mud, but in that moment as he laid there, he felt like it wouldn't have been such a bad thing if he never woke up.**

**He'd always wanted to die in his father's arms, but the earth had always been like his mother, and maybe that was enough. Maybe to die on solid ground was close enough to dying in a parent's embrace.**

**The screen went dark.**

They stared uncomfortably, Tommy's sickly pale body laying in the sand burned into their minds.

"What was... I mean like... what were you doing in the ocean?" Sam asked, furrowing his brow. Tommy didn't seem all that bothered, staring at the creeper hybrid with attentive eyes.

"I dunno." He admitted, not seeming very embarrassed or upset by it. Techno squinted at the kid, as if trying to get a better read, and Tubbo and Ranboo shared a look.

"You don't know?" Phil asked quietly, hat casting a shadow over his eyes.

Tommy shook his head, "I tried to figure it out or guess a couple times but eventually I just kinda... accepted it, y'know? Like. It became part of my routine, yeah?"

The room went quiet, and Puffy paled.

"That was a regular thing?" She asked hesitantly, as if she wasn't sure she wanted the answer.

"Almost every day." Tommy hummed, and though he seemed undisturbed his eyes were itching and his clothes felt wet and he swore he could smell that disgusting seaweed air. He

smiled weakly.

No one quite knew what to say. What *was* there to say? ‘That’s not normal’? ‘Don’t do that’? What the hell were you supposed to say at a time like then?

They were quiet, letting the silence stretch out. Tommy frowned, staring at the ground and sighing deeply.

With every memory that came, he could see his chances of not ending up completely alone slipping further and further down the drain. No one would stick around once they got further in; not once they had irrefutable proof of what he really was.

# The Party

## Chapter Summary

believe it or not this is the calm before the storm.

TRIGGER WARNINGS: manipulation, hallucinations and self-harm

Sapnap could still remember the day Tommy first joined the server.

All by himself, with the promise that his big brother would be following suit in no time, he had a bouncy head of blond hair and bright blue eyes that matched the elastics on his braces. He was awkward and gangly, clumsy too, but he paraded around with purpose; Acting like he owned the place.

Word of their specific SMP travelled around quite a bit, so Tommy had strolled in already knowing their names and, well, being *Tommy*. He'd singled Sapnap out, recognizing him immediately because 'he just looked like a Sapnap', and continued on his way after cursing the blaze hybrid out for no definite reason. Where others were timid and submissive when they first joined, normally letting an older member give them a tour and taking time to settle in, Tommy came hurtling in, running around excitedly and claiming everything as his own.

Of course, Sapnap, George and Sam had sat in the community house that very night, questioning whether Dream had finally fallen off. Who would let a kid like that in? He was loud and crude and *mean*. He existed to cause problems, but Dream had sternly told them all to be nice, that Tommy was new and that he'd eventually settle down.

Seeing the boy now, warped by time with dull grey eyes and nails picked raw, his hair flat and greasy, Sapnap wondered if Dream's words had been a promise. He wondered if the masked man had *made* Tommy settle down, because it was apparent his usual lust for life had up and gone.

If he was being honest, Sapnap had never been overly fond of the kid. Of course, there was always that feeling of responsibility; the one that came and camped inside his head, letting



him know he should always watch out for the youngest on the server, but it felt obligatory. He found Tommy annoying, as most did, and while he didn't want to hurt the kid's feelings, he really didn't want to spend much time around him.

However, he'd seen a different side of Tommy when the war between him and Ponk had broken out. The blond had proven to be resourceful and driven, as well as crafty when need be. He was an asset, and Sapnap found that just *maybe* he was a bit more tolerable than he'd initially thought.

Once Tommy had gained his respect, there wasn't much else to say about their relationship. He had closer friends, as did Tommy, but there was an unspoken link between them. No matter how many times the blond had screamed and spat at him, he knew it was all in good fun.

Then, of course, the pet war had come, and things had become... Well, neither of them were quite happy with each other. Tommy was ruined by the loss of his cow, and Sapnap was horrified that the blond would even *think* about hurting Mars.

And when it had all come to a close, despite claiming to want to keep their friendship alive, they drifted on. Sapnap had Dream and George, and Tommy had Wilbur and Tubbo. There wasn't much else to it, really. There wasn't some bitter awful backstory, in fact, if anything, it was something they both enjoyed looking back on.

Come L'Manberg any hope of staying friends went down the drain. War was a game changer. Sapnap became hardened by the acts of violence, steeling himself over as he forced himself to plunge his sword into the hearts of former friends. There was no time for him and Tommy to be friends, and the whole world had been in constant motion ever since the nation came to life; leaving not even a single moment to rekindle old bonds.

So Sapnap had left it as it was, and he was sure Tommy was content doing the same.

Of course he'd heard of exile, and he'd watched Quackity hold back Tommy as he screamed and cried at the sight of his brother's body, but he'd never really stopped to think about whether or not the boy could have used a hand. He'd never stopped to reach out, despite claiming he was still friends with the boy.

And now he was being forced to confront the fact that he'd really had no clue what had been going on with Tommy at all. He wasn't even sure how to put into words what he felt but it *burned* inside of him. Watching the endless slimy lies that spouted from Dream's mouth along with the punches and kicks, it made a sort of horror and rage he'd never felt before brew inside of him. He'd *trusted* Dream, and yet he was sitting there watching the man abuse and manipulate the server's youngest.

*How could he?* It didn't matter that Tommy was loud and annoying and a pain because he was still a kid and he was still Sapnap's *friend*. He'd been so happy and bright when he'd first shown up and Dream had done everything in his power to extinguish his flame.

And for what?

Sapnap wracked his mind, scanning over years and years of friendship and little actions and words behind closed doors, trying to think of when or how it could have become possible. He didn't understand why his friend would do such things, but in the end he'd found nothing.

Seeing that moment in the Nether, having the gut-wrenching realization that it was *seconds* away from going horribly wrong and he'd been just a couple meters away... it made something awful and painful clench in his chest.

He didn't know... *No one* had known... but it didn't make it feel any better. He couldn't even imagine it; what Tommy had been through. The thought of being so alone, so cold and hurt, for so long, was terrifying.

A part of him felt guilty, yes, but another part, a larger part, was *furious*. Not only at Dream, despite what Tommy had said about the masked man being the only one to blame, but also at the others.

How had Tommy's father and brother not noticed? How had Tubbo never known? How had the people Tommy was *actually* close to not have seen?

His eyes flitted over to Quackity for a moment before he quickly looked away. He'd already been cross with both his fiancées for quite some time due to unrelated things, but the fact that Quackity had been so close to Tommy at the time, the fact that he'd been in the fucking cabinet and not done anything... It made him even angrier.

Believe it or not, Sapnap wasn't a complete moron (despite what George would tell you). He knew when to blame himself for the most part. And he did. He blamed himself for not seeing, for not being there, for not noticing, but he blamed the people that were genuinely close with Tommy even more.

He didn't know what was going on with Tommy at the moment, but if he was still living in that little dirt shack by the massive crater in the ground filled to the brim with blood vines all by himself, Sapnap was more than willing to take him in when this all finished. He owed the kid that much, at least.

He looked over at his beanie-clad fiancé once again, pursing his lips.

There was already an empty room Tommy could take over.

He sighed, ignoring the look he got across the row from George and stretching his arms out. He felt... wrong. It was hard to watch something so brutal, knowing it was real and that it had happened, and that you had no control over it. It was even harder when the villain on the screen was your best friend.

He wasn't excited about anything that was soon to come, but he was praying to the moon and back that it would be over sooner rather than later. Surely there wasn't *that* much more left... was there?

The screen flickered to life.

**Tommy trudged through the snow, his right shoe missing and sock damp. The frigid air and icy ground had his foot almost frozen solid, burning. He hugged himself tightly, teeth chattering as he trekked up a large hill, clothes looking a bit more tattered than they had before. A small trail of smoke drifted into the skies from behind it.**

“That’s not exile.” George muttered.

“Wow George, you’re right!” Sapnap replied with fake enthusiasm, earning both a snort and an elbow in the ribs from Karl.

They tried to ignore the state Tommy was in. They tried to ignore the terrified look in his eyes.

**He tilted his chin up, watching the tiny cottage come into view. His eyes shone, the sun reflecting off the snow.**

Recognition flashed in a few people’s eyes and Ranboo was suddenly *very* excited. Tommy was at Techno’s cabin, and that had to mean that he’d escaped exile, right?

Quite a few others seemed to be thinking the same thing, hoping silently.

**“Technoblade...” Tommy whispered, lips parted slightly in shock. He picked up the pace, making his way over to the little home, limping slightly.**

Technoblade shifted uncomfortably at the particular lilt in Tommy’s tone, feeling something unrecognizable creep up his spine.

“Why were you at Techno’s?” Quackity questioned, “How did you even find it?”

“Dream mentioned it one time... That Techno was nearby, y’know? Just did a bit of professional detective work, eh?” Tommy grinned, earning an amused eye roll from the duck hybrid.

**He approached the stable, letting a small smile fall over his face. The large stallion inside huffed loudly at him, shaking its head.**

**“Hello there.” Tommy grinned, stroking the horse gently. Carl rumbled, his hulking frame looming over the blond.**

Puffy’s heart clenched at the sight of the boy with the horse. She smiled sadly.

**Tommy pried himself away, sending over a few longing looks before forcing himself inside. He was hunched over, eyes flitting around nervously.**

**His scarred hands brushed over the spruce doorframe, stepping nervously inside and scanning his surroundings. It was... cozy. Not too big, with a wall of chests to his left, a couch and fireplace to his right, and a stairway heading both down and up as well as a hallway further in front of him. He pursed his lips, taking a hesitant step forward and wincing at how loudly the floorboard creaked as he put his weight onto it.**

**“Hello?” He called hesitantly, clearing his throat and calling out another, louder time. There was no answer, the wind howling outside being the only sound. Tommy bit the inside of his cheek, furrowing his brow and closing the door behind him.**

**Curiously, he made his way over to the chests, gently opening one and beginning to rifle through it with wide and intrigued eyes. He gasped at the assortment of treasures, a small smile falling over his face.**

“You little raccoon.” Techno muttered quietly, and there was a brief moment where Tommy only stared at him, lips pursed as though he wasn’t going to answer.

“Hey man, there’s nothing wrong with being a raccoon.” He settled on finally, though it sounded forced.

**He continued to search, leaving everything where he'd found it. His touch was delicate, a ghost of the clumsy and hands-on approach he'd once had. Every breath was calculated, as though he was teetering on the edge of a cliff.**

Phil didn't like seeing it. Didn't like seeing how scared his son had become. Tommy had always been a messy hurricane, never leaving things where he found them and creating unintentional disaster everywhere he went.

The winged man's fist clenched as he tried to reign himself in.

**All at once he stood, abruptly shutting a chest closed and clenching his fists tight.**

**"Dream wouldn't like it if I was here." He declared, though there was no one for miles but himself. "He wouldn't."**

Ranboo frowned, furrowing his brow.

**Tommy shook his head, ruffling a hand through his matted hair and whining quietly. He made his way for the exit, much less elegant than when he'd entered. He stumbled out into the snow, nearly tripping over his feet as he scrambled away. He paid no mind to the cold on his almost barefoot, straightening out and staring back at the little home.**

**"He'd be fucking pissed..." He murmured, chewing on his lip anxiously. "I-I have to go. Before he finds out."**

All the hope the people had been feeling, that desperate sort of hope that it would've been the end, was shattered just like that. Ranboo's heart sank.

**With a panicked breath, he turned on his heel, quickly making his way back in the direction he'd come. As he stood at the top of the hill, he took one last glance back at the little cottage, a look in his eyes that was hard to place, before continuing on his path.**

**The screen faded to black.**

“Why didn’t you stay?” Niki muttered, not making eye contact. She was tense, sitting ramrod straight.

“Cause Dream would’ve been mad? Duh.” Tommy laughed quietly, “I literally said it.”

“But you could have hidden from him.” Sam pressed. The teen instantly seemed to grow defensive, frowning angrily.

“Don’t you do that,” he growled, “don’t- don’t you make me feel like an idiot for not leaving... Dream...” he paused, pouting slightly, “actually, never mind. You wouldn’t get it.” He scoffed, rolling his eyes.

Jack glared bitterly at him, though it went unnoticed.

Neither Sam nor Niki replied.

**“Tommy!” An excited voice cried, somewhere not too far off in the distance. The waves crashed against the shore, the sun shining down on the sandy beach.**

The voice was not welcome in the room. Having been clinging to the idea that maybe, just maybe, exile had come to a close made the ordeal of having to hear Dream speak even more tedious.

Just how much longer would things go on for?

**Tommy was curled up near the shoreline, staring at the bugs weaving in and out of little grains of sand. His eyes were dull, as though he wasn’t fully there, knees drawn to his**

**chest as one hand traced patterns in the sand.**

Tubbo's chest tightened at the sight, and he tried to make the feeling go away.

**When he heard the call, however, he immediately perked up. Like a dog whose owner had returned, a certain bounciness and liveliness returned to the boy at the sound of Dream's voice. He looked over excitedly, standing and dusting himself off before making his way over.**

Phil felt acid on his tongue, glaring angrily at the screen. The joy on Tommy's face made him feel sick.

**Dream was standing tall, waving happily at the blond. As soon as he saw that Tommy's attention was captivated he began to dig a hole, same as always. Tommy, however, didn't falter. He continued on his way, the only indication of something being wrong was the millisecond where his smile fell before he plastered it right back up.**

Niki didn't know how to place what she felt. She remained quiet, biting her tongue.

Karl's eyes narrowed at the hole in the ground, and he sat up slightly straighter.

**Neither said anything as Tommy calmly deposited his items in the hole, staring down at them forlornly. Dream chuckled quietly, placing the TNT.**

Puffy didn't like that. She didn't like that at all. Where was Tommy's defiance? Where had his spark gone?

**"Oh, shoot..." He fumbled awkwardly, patting down his pockets, "I don't think I have any flint and steel on me, Toms. Can you light it?"**



**Tommy paled, the colour draining from his face as he frowned, staring up at Dream and then back down the hole. He shifted uncomfortably.**

**“...But I worked so hard on these things.” He whispered, refusing to make eye contact with the older man, “I-I don’t want to.”**

Techno eyed up the screen, frowning slightly. The Tommy he knew would have launched into a barrage of insults... not whispered morosely.

*Did he ever really know Tommy?*

**“Just do it, Tommy.” Dream rolled his eyes, making the blond flinch.**

**Tommy bit the inside of his cheek, faltering for a moment. He sighed, looking slightly pained. “...Okay.” He managed, a lump in his throat.**

**Dream looked pleased with himself, backing away as Tommy summoned flint and steel from his inventory.**

**The blond gasped in pain as the explosion went off, being thrown back by the force and feeling the heat on his skin. Dream was unphased, looming over him. Tommy hissed, rubbing at his forearms which were red and raw.**

Tommy flinched slightly at the sound, using his uneven bitten nail to trace a jagged line on his arm, keeping him grounded. He couldn’t freak out again.

The skin he was scratching at was pink and firm; scar tissue. It broke easier under his fingers. He could still feel the burns dancing up and down them.

**“So,” The masked man took a large step over the minuscule crater, hands folded behind his back, “What’s up?”**

Quackity sneered at the screen, loathing how casually the man acted. It was fucking vile.

**Tommy swallowed thickly, taking a moment to stare at the blisters and scabs littering his hands before he looked back up, slowly and shakily getting to his feet. "I... I had a few things I wanted to ask you, actually." He admitted, looking a little dazed, ears still ringing.**

**"Hm," Dream craned his neck, staring back at the boy, his mask void and empty, "well? Go ahead."**

**"Right uh," Tommy chuckled awkwardly, bringing a hand up to rub sheepishly at the back of his neck, "I-I just wanted to talk to you, I had like- a proposal, and I wanted to know if I was like... Allowed."**

Tubbo bit his tongue at the words, frowning and looking over at his friend. 'Allowed.' As if Dream had any jurisdiction over him.

**"Go on."**

**"Well," He grinned nervously, "you obviously know that no one's been coming to visit me... And I thought maybe, just maybe, if I gave them a reason, like an official invitation, they might show up! Maybe they're just unsure o-or don't know when to come or where it is!" He faltered, realizing how excited he was getting and quickly lowering his voice, "So like... could I possibly, and it's okay if no... have a party?"**

Ranboo felt the blood drain from his face, frowning deeply.

The party. The party which he'd overheard Ghostbur and Tommy talking about at Techno's. The party no one had shown up to, apparently. The party everyone had been invited to, apparently.

Tommy's cheeks went red, and he dipped his head to avoid anyone's gazes.

**Dream didn't reply, looking over at a large plot of sand slightly off to the side. His body language was impossible to read, and the stupid mask obscured Tommy from knowing what he was thinking.**

**"What, like a beach episode?" He tilted his head. A bit of the excitement and life came back to Tommy's eyes as he did.**

**"Not even that!" Tommy shook his head, "Just a tiny gathering! Miniscule, really!"**

**"Well I have no problem with that," Dream hummed, "why would I?"**

The people in the audience were all thinking the same thing, wondering why they'd never received an invitation. They remained silent, however.

"A party sounds nice." Puffy smiled softly.

She didn't understand why Tommy seemed so upset by her words.

**The expression on Tommy's face was priceless. He bounced on his feet, ignoring the pain and burning in his joints and on his skin, grinning wide. "Really?"**

**Dream chuckled, sounding amused, "Of course, Tommy." He agreed, "I just want what's best for you."**

*Liar.* Tubbo hissed in his mind.

Tommy, however, felt a long-dormant part of him grow warm at the words.

**Tommy beamed, rocking back and forth on his heels. He spun around, quickly beginning to pace back and forth as he hashed things out. “I’ll give invites to D- uh Phil and Niki, of course.”**

Tommy sank lower in his seat, trying to avoid his father’s gaze. Phil was staring sadly at his youngest, wings ruffling unhappily.

Niki shot him a glance, though she said nothing.

**“Oh! And Jack!” He laughed excitedly, “I haven’t seen him in so long... I miss him.” He paused, slipping into a melancholic state for just a second before perking right back up. He continued to ramble on and on about food and entertainment and how *excited* he was to see everyone again.**

Jack felt ice rush through his veins at the words, jaw nearly dropping. Someone had missed him? *Tommy* had missed him?

It didn’t even matter that Tommy so obviously would have taken anyone’s company at that point, it was that Jack was considered anybody.

He didn’t know how to react, only nodding silently.

Had Tommy really missed him?

**“-and of course, I’ll set up seating a-” Tommy cut himself off abruptly, peering off into a forested area. He narrowed his eyes, frowning deeply and trying to make out whatever he was seeing. Dream stared at the boy, intrigued.**

**Tubbo poked his head out from behind a tree, smiling blankly at Tommy.**

Everyone blinked in surprise. Of all things Tommy could have been looking at, Tubbo was the last thing they would have expected.

Tubbo froze, eyes wide.

**The younger reared back, letting out a shocked gasp and stumbling back a couple of steps. Tubbo giggled quietly to himself, retreating back to behind the tree.**

“You went to visit him?” Quackity asked, brow furrowed. The president had told him on multiple occasions that he was too busy and that Tommy didn’t want to see him.

“...I never did.” Tubbo admitted quietly.

The temperature in the room dropped, and Tommy bit the inside of his cheek.

“Then what...?”

**“What’s going on?” Dream pressed, sounding slightly concerned, “What do you see?”**

**“Tubbo...” Tommy murmured, scanning the treeline once more, “I saw Tubbo!”**

The ram-hybrid’s heart clenched.

**The masked man let out a huff of a laugh, relaxing immediately. “Oh come on,” he rolled his eyes, a hint of a smile in his voice.**

**“N-No I’m serious, Dream! I did!” Tommy pointed toward the trees, “I’m not lying!” He looked over the area once more, desperate to spot his friend, but there was nothing there.**

And they knew he wasn't lying, because they'd seen it too.

The only issue was that Tubbo hadn't been lying either.

**"Tommy," Dream began, sounding almost as if he was chastising or speaking to a toddler, "If Tubbo was coming to visit he'd have told me. And even if he didn't and *was* here, he wouldn't hide!" He paused, softening slightly, "Have you eaten enough today? Have you drank enough water? How much sleep did you get?"**

**Tommy tried to paw the hands cupping his face off as Dream fretted over him. Normally he'd be all over it, eagerly jumping at the chance of any human contact, but he'd seen *Tubbo*. He looked over at the trees again, practically begging for his friend to appear once more, but to no avail. He sighed, shoulders dropping.**

No one was quite sure how to react, unsure of what was going on.

**"Maybe you're right..." He muttered, "I... I don't know..."**

**"Come on," Dream ushered him, smiling sympathetically and placing a hand on his shoulder, "let's keep discussing your party."**

**"Y-Yeah," the boy nodded, pursing his lips and stealing another glance towards the forest.**

Tubbo frowned.

**"So like, how many people are you thinking? Cause we can have Ghostbur send out invites, and you have a pretty big space here so..."**

Ranboo glared at the words, having overheard what had really happened.

**The masked man's word vomit quickly faded, Tommy tuning it out completely as he craned his neck back toward where he'd seen Tubbo. He looked over the trees, picking apart every detail and little thing out of place, but his friend was nowhere to be found.**

**Maybe he *was* crazy.**

**Just as he was about to go back to listening to whatever Dream was saying, a head of fluffy brown hair popped out from behind that same tree. Tubbo smiled blankly, staring holes into Tommy.**

“What the hell is going on...?” Fundy muttered, leaning forward with intrigue.

Tommy flushed with embarrassment.

**“-ential, you know? And I think we could-” Dream was cut off as Tommy jumped into a sprint, hurtling over to the trees, “What!? Tommy, what are you doing!?” He cried out, following after the blond.**

**Tommy paid him no mind, eyes wide and both his mind and heart racing as he made a desperate scramble towards the trees. His feet thumped against the ground, and he ignored the painful feeling of rocks digging into his foot without a shoe. The wind rushed in his ears, drowning out Dream's protests.**

Despite knowing what Tubbo had said, many of them couldn't help but hope he was really there regardless. *Anything* other than watching Dream break Tommy down would have been a godsend by then.

**He swerved around the tree trunk, expecting to find his friend, perhaps to jump into Tubbo's arms and cry out '*You came! you visited! you still care about me!*' but he was**

**met with empty space. He came to a complete stop, staring at the spot in the grass he would've expected his best friend to be standing in.**

**... What?**

No one spoke, completely sucked in by the confusing mystery.

**He could faintly hear Dream calling out to him, telling him to come back, but it didn't really register in his mind. He swallowed back a lump in his throat, trying to ignore how he could hear his heart thumping loudly. He turned wordlessly, confused and disoriented.**

**And that was when Tubbo stepped through the portal just a couple feet away.**

Tubbo breathed heavily, unsettled by the version of him on screen. Many others seemed upset by it as well.

**He was dressed in his suit. The very one he'd been wearing when he exiled Tommy. His hair was a bit shaggier, but still rather kempt. The scars covering his face and hands seemed to glow in the sun's glare. Draped over his neck was a compass. He was smiling, head tilted to the left as he just... stared. With empty eyes.**

**Tommy tried to find his voice, tried to call out, but his mouth was dry, and he could barely breathe. He took a hesitant step forward, reaching a shaky hand out.**

Ranboo wanted to cry, watching Tommy's pale hand reach out. It felt cruel if not anything else.

**Tubbo said nothing, the wind ruffling his hair as he continued to smile, never once blinking or breaking eye contact.**



**Tommy took another step forwards, and Tubbo took two back. The blond frowned, stepping ahead again. His friend stepped back into the portal.**

*Don't go.* Tubbo wanted to say, even though he knew it wasn't really him. *Stay with him.*

**His eyes widened, opening his mouth to object, but nothing came out. He outstretched his hand even further, taking two more steps towards the boy, but in the blink of an eye the portal had engulfed Tubbo, and he was gone.**

Tubbo let his eyes fall shut, sighing deeply, disappointed in himself despite the fact that it hadn't truly been him. He just felt... upset with himself.

**Tommy stared in shock, wide eyes watching the swirling purple mass blankly. It wasn't till a hand clapped tightly around his shoulder that he was broken from his trance. Dream was standing behind him, quietly observing.**

**"Tommy, what are you doing?" He asked quietly.**

**"I.. I saw Tubbo- for *real*, Dream." Tommy managed, feeling the grip on his shoulder tighten slightly, "I- He walked through the portal! We- He made eye contact with me! He came through and then left again!"**

Phil's heart broke at the desperation in Tommy's tone. How much damage could have been prevented if they'd just... been there? The phantom feeling of his anklet was suddenly digging into his skin.

**There was a loud silence, and Tommy could practically feel Dream's stare boring into him through the mask.**

**After what felt like eons, the masked man sighed.**

**“Tommy, I was watching the whole thing,” He began hesitantly, “I could see the portal... There was no one there but you.”**

And despite them all having been expecting it, the actual statement was nonetheless hard to hear.

Puffy felt tears building in her eyes.

**Tommy froze, taking a step back. He glanced over at the portal before looking back at Dream. He stared at the little pinhole eyes, waiting for the man to say it was a joke, but it never came.**

**“No...” He shook his head, furrowing his brow, “No but- but I *saw* him! I-”**

Tubbo shut his eyes tight, trying to block it all out.

Tommy grit his teeth, staring down at the ground.

**“Tommy.” Dream addressed him sternly, making the teen snap his mouth shut, “Tubbo’s not here. He was never here... He’s never coming here.”**

*Shut up. Shut up. Shut up.*

**The hand fell from his shoulder, and the older man shoved his hands into his pockets. Tommy frowned, looking at the portal once more. He grit his teeth.**

**“But...”**

**“Just drop it, Tommy.” Dream groaned, throwing his head back, “Let’s get back to planning your party, yeah? *Then*, maybe Tubbo will actually come visit.”**

Tubbo bit down on his tongue. Hard.

Ranboo’s hand found his own, but he pushed it away.

**Tommy paused, clenching his fists at his side as he watched Dream casually make his way back over to tnet. He swallowed back something bitter, feeling the portal call out to him.**

**“Yeah...”**

**The screen went dark.**

There was silence, all eyes falling on the blond in the front left corner of the room. His face was beet red, teeth grit angrily.

But still, he managed a tight smile. Turning to look at all of them.

“Surprise...?” He laughed awkwardly.

No one laughed with him.

“So you were...?”

“Hallucinating, big man.” Tommy finished Tubbo’s sentence, “You can say it, y’know. It’s not a swear. Not like fuck or shit. Not like a bad word.” He seemed to be amused by his antics, which was probably a good thing, seeing as everyone else looked to be sick.

“How often did you?” Puffy asked quietly, eyes sad. Tommy shifted uncomfortably under her gaze, laughing awkwardly.

“I mean it’s hard to tell, am I right?” He grinned, though he was nervously sweating, “I did have two incredibly hot girlfriends, though. And those *couldn’t* have been ha-llucinations. All women that flock to me are *very* real.”

Obviously, he didn’t want to talk about it, so they let it go. Ranboo was staring down at him worriedly, however, and there was only so much of that he could take.

“Look away or I’m taking your eyes out, boob boy.” He hissed.

Ranboo didn’t seem intimidated, but he still turned his head regardless.

The screen came back to life.

**The beach was dark, and the water was cold and unforgiving. Tommy had his pants rolled up, shoe and socks discarded in the sand as he stared out into the sea. His calves were covered in lacerations and bruises, many of them looking fresh. Behind him, a plethora of decorations and other things were set up. There were party chairs and parasols, though they’d be quite useless at night. On the table to the left, there was a cake, completely untouched.**

Instantly, Tommy’s bravado fell. He paled dramatically, eyes widening.

The others all seemed to grow surprised at the sight, furrowing their brows.

**“Woah, what’s going on here?” A voice called, “Where is everyone?”**

Ranboo's grip on the armrests tightened angrily.

**The night air was cold, and the wind wasn't so harsh as it was a continuous unrelenting flow.**

**Tommy turned his head, his eyes were red and puffy, tear tracks still drying on his face. "...Dream?" He called out hesitantly, voice rough and scratchy.**

Niki grit her teeth, trying not to be sent back to the days where she'd comfort Tommy after he'd had nightmares. His face had looked just like that, eyes glazed over with unshed tears, and she'd kiss him gently on the brow, guiding him back to Tubbo, Fundy, and his' room. Wilbur was always off doing 'work' during those days, so she and Jack were left to deal with the child soldiers and their dreams plagued by blood and death.

She pushed it all away. Her Tommy didn't exist anymore. She didn't know who he'd grown into, but he didn't care about her.

**Dream was standing on a ledge before the little party area, head tilted, mask ever-present, and still dressed head to toe in netherite.**

**"Tommy," He began quietly, jumping down and making his way over, "are you... What happened?"**

*You know exactly what happened.* Ranboo wanted to curse the man out, but settled instead for the angry grinding of his teeth as he sat in his place.

**The tide came back, washing up against the shore.**

**Tommy said nothing for a moment, looking back out to the sea, fingers, and knees twitching as though it was taking everything within him not to walk further in. There were bloody marks on his forearms, his nails were coated in red at his side.**

Phil bit the inside of his cheek, taking a deep breath.

**“Nobody came.” He managed hoarsely, trying to bite back a whine.**

“Who was invited?” Karl asked quietly.

“All of you.” Tommy muttered.

The room’s occupants looked at one another, confused.

“But we never got any inv-”

“I know.” Tommy bit out harshly. “We’re not going to talk about it.”

**“What, are you serious?” Dream demanded, looking around, “You’re kidding, right?”**

**The blond swallowed back a lump in his throat, clenching his fists. His shoulders were hiked up, whole body tense. “You don’t have to act surprised, Dream.” He sighed, “You- you kept telling me people didn’t care anymore but... but I didn’t listen.”**

“Tommy...” Sapnap whispered, frowning sadly.

The worst of it all, wasn’t that Tommy thought that way, but that *Tommy* thought that way. He was supposed to be the arrogant little brat of the server; that was his role. He was supposed to be annoying and majorly disliked but still convinced everyone loved him.

It wasn’t right. It wasn’t the Tommy they knew.

**Neither of them spoke, their clothes billowing in the wind.**

**“Guess I just didn’t want to believe you...” He muttered, staring down at his toes in the water. They were freezing, so cold it felt like little knives pricking at his skin, but it made him feel real.**

**“To-”**

**“No one cares about me anymore.” Tommy interrupted, not turning to look at the man. His voice was hollow and monotone. “They don’t care.”**

Phil swallowed down bile, trying to compose himself. The imaginary band on his ankle felt even tighter.

*You should have been there. You should have been there.*

**Dream took a few steps closer, “Tommy...”**

**“No one cares!” The blond managed, laughing incredulously, “No one cares about me anymore!”**

**The tide hit his knees again, and he had to fight the urge to just let himself go; to let himself fall into the frigid waters.**

**“That’s not true...” Dream tried, soles crunching in the sand.**

**“It is!” Tommy cried out, “No one cares! No one cares!”**

It was... painful to watch. Something about Tommy of all people being reduced to *that* was just unpalatable.

**Dream was finally just a foot away, standing on the tide's edge. Tommy could feel his sad stare.**

**“Why don't you step out of the water, Tommy?” He murmured, “You're gonna get sick.”**

**“Who even cares at this point?” The blond scoffed, but got out all the same, not bothering to wipe the sand from his feet before putting on his socks and shoe; something that would no doubt cause blisters and irritation down the line, but he didn't look concerned.**

A majority of the room cringed at the action, all the while Tommy just looked humiliated.

**“I do.” Dream pressed firmly, placing his hand on Tommy's shoulder, and though the mask covered his face, the teen still felt as if he was staring into the man's eyes.**

**Tommy's eyes widened, and he instantly took a step back, opening his inventory immediately. “Sorry...”**

A chill ran through the room.

George felt a sick feeling in his stomach. Dream had conditioned Tommy into this behavior. He'd done that to a *kid*.

**A gentle hand was placed on his wrist, and it caused him to stop, looking up.**

**“Don't.” Dream hummed softly, “We don't have to do that today.”**



Sam felt his rage grow at the words. How could Dream phrase it as if he was being generous? As if he was anything but cruel?

**Tommy's lips parted in shock, and he looked back down at his inventory. "A-Are you sure? I mean-"**

**"I'm sure, Tommy." The masked man smiled.**

**Tommy smiled back, and the screen began to shift.**

Tubbo didn't like the way his friend smiled; as though he was *lucky* he didn't have to go through what Dream put him through on a daily basis. It made his blood boil.

**The Nether was hot, the lava below making Tommy sweat more than he would've liked. He stood on the edge of his obsidian path, glimmering diamond pickaxe in his hand and a hard-set look in his eye. Dream was looming behind him, not saying a word.**

The Nether set off alarm bells in all their heads, and they couldn't help but look to the blond who was sitting hunched over, half brooding and half trying to keep himself grounded.

**Tommy stared bitterly across the divide, glaring daggers into the distance. His hands were clenched tightly at his side, knuckles white. All around him Ghasts and other hellish mobs ambled around, but he didn't acknowledge them. If it weren't for Dream deflecting blasts... well.**

Why wasn't he defending himself? Why wasn't he... Why wasn't... *Why?*

**But as quickly as it had come, Tommy's anger fled. All at once the tension that had been building in his shoulders disappeared, and he slouched, letting out a tiny sigh. He**

**wordlessly handed the pickaxe to Dream, moving close to the edge to stare down at the bubbling magma.**

Sapnap was tense, teeth grit. *Get away from the edge. Please just step away.* The fact that Tommy was there and alive in the room with him did little to quell his fear.

**Without even registering the action, his right hand snaked up, clasp around the compass. He stared down at it, gripping it tight. *Your Tubbo* stared back at him, almost mockingly.**

***He knew where to find me.* Tommy thought bitterly, hand almost shaking with how tight he was holding the compass. His eyes shone with unshed tears, glowing in the lava's light.**

Tubbo bit back a whine, and Tommy flushed with guilt. He'd never meant to make Tubbo upset.

**"Tubbo burned his, you know?"**

The room went very quiet, and Tubbo blanched. Eyes fell to him and he frowned.

"I didn't," he began, "I wouldn't *ever*. I-"

"I know Tubs." Tommy smiled softly. He stopped there. Tubbo faltered, brows drawn together. The rage he'd been feeling grew ever so slightly, but he pushed it down.

**Tommy went very still, half expecting the scope to crush under his grip. He didn't turn around, pursing his lips quietly. *Your Tubbo.***

**"What?" He managed, voice hoarse from yelling and crying. Behind him he felt Dream grow closer, hovering just inches away.**

**“I mean, I didn’t see it personally. But I’ve been told Tubbo burnt his compass. Just like that.”**

*Liar.* Tubbo bared his teeth angrily, practically fuming, *Shut up shut up shut up.*

***Your Tubbo. Your Tubbo. Your Tubbo.***

**The tears didn’t come, but something inside of him, deep in his chest, snapped. His irises suddenly seemed even duller, almost a complete grey in the bask of the Nether’s glow. His fingers curled over the engravement, teeth gritting. He bowed his head, letting a shadow fall over his face.**

**“He wouldn’t.”**

**“I wouldn’t,”** Tubbo affirmed, face hardened with determination and anger. **“I wouldn’t.”**

Tommy didn’t say anything.

**Dream didn’t reply, and for some reason that was all the more worse. Tommy sniffled, rubbing at his nose with the back of his arm and glaring down into the blistering heat.**

**Tubbo hadn’t come to the party. Tubbo had burned the compass. If Tubbo didn’t care that was more than enough proof that *no one* cared.**

**No one but Dream.**

**Wordlessly, Tommy pulled the string of the compass, raising it up and away from his neck. He held it out at eye level, watching it sway back and forth, and his arm extended over the ledge.**

Tubbo grimaced, thinking back to earlier when he'd watched Tommy place the compass beside the discs.

**All at once a cacophony of voices broke free in his mind. They melted together, repeated over and over again, merging with one another.**

***“The discs don’t matter, Tommy!”***

***“Tommyinnit you’re scared.”***

***“They’re. Just. Music. Discs.”***

***“Tubbo? He’s lying to you man!”***

***“Gentlemen, welcome to the Final Control Room.”***

***“He would drop us at the second!”***

***“You’re selfish.”***

***“Down with the revolution, boys.”***

***“Put your things in the hole, Tommy.”***

***“I don’t give a fuck about Spirit, okay? I care about your discs!”***

***“You want to be a hero, Tommy?”***

***“Cause he’s your Tubbo!”***

***“You don’t hate me, Tommy.”***

***“Maybe if you’d actually listened to me!”***

***“What does Tommy like most in the world?”***

***“It was never meant to be.”***

***“Then die like one!”***

The sounds overlapping were extremely overwhelming, and many of them had to cover their ears.

***“-ommy! Tommy!”***

Tommy was snapped from his trance by a hand clumsily gripping his own. Dream was inches away, his own arm outstretched, gloved hand curled around the compass’ string.

Tommy blinked in shock, flexing his fingers. He’d nearly let go.

“Let’s...” Dream guided him away from the edge, grinning at the way Tommy leant into the touch, “Why don’t you sleep on it... yeah?”

**Tommy glanced back at the lava, and then down to the compass. He clutched it tightly, pressing it to his chest and closing his eyes.**

Ranboo's chest ached at the action, and he felt rage swell beneath his skin.

**“Yeah...” He muttered, letting Dream's hand on the small of his back guide him, “Yeah maybe I should.”**

**The screen went dark.**

“I'm fucking done with this shit.” Tommy mumbled, eyes angry, “I don't want to sit through any more of it.”

Ranboo smiled sympathetically. “I'm sure there isn't much more to go.” He tried.

If Tommy's bitter laugh was anything to take from, there seemed to be a lot they weren't prepared for. Most of them tried to ignore that.

“I'm sorry I just,” Puffy piped up, “I don't get it. Why did no one come to the party? You were so excited about it Tommy...”

The blond scowled, muttering unintelligible things to himself. Ranboo frowned.

“What?” Quackity leaned forward, craning his neck to hear.

“*Dream.*” Tommy growled out, gritting his teeth. “He... He took the invites from Ghostbur... made sure no one got them.”

“And then showed up like some saint.” Techno said, something undecipherable in his tone.

“*Motherfucker...*” Phil managed, taking them all aback by the pure animosity in his tone.

Tommy shifted uncomfortably, frowning to himself.

“I-I don’t *really* know if that’s what happened,” he butted in, “I mean that’s what Ghostbur said but you know he’s pretty dumb so...”

“No,” Quackity shook his head, “No that’s exactly what he’d do... God Tommy I’m so sorry.” He looked... sad. Tommy had never seen him look that sad before, only when Wilbur had died.

“We had no idea.” George told him, and though his expression was unreadable, he definitely sounded sad.

“It was just a party, fellas.” Tommy laughed awkwardly, throwing up a grin. “Really I was just being dramatic...” He didn’t want to talk about it. It was embarrassing. The whole thing was embarrassing. He wanted to *leave*.

“Like hell you were!” Sapnap cried, smoke emanating from his palms. Karl put a hand on the small of his back.

“Look,” Tommy began, exasperated, “This shit? It’s over. I’m done with it, and I don’t need you all sitting here discussing it like some hot gossip. Okay? I’m done. Dunzo. No more. We aren’t doing this anymore.”

“Tommy we already went over this,” Puffy frowned, “You can’t just be *over* something like th-”

“*Well I am!*” The teen cried out, glaring at them all. “I’m done and- and I’m not going back! So that’s that!”

As the room dissolved into an awkward silence, unsure of what to say, an annoyed figure loomed overhead.

Drista pursed her lips, glaring at Tommy

Things were going to change. Whether he liked it or not.



# if i close this door

## Chapter Summary

jack manifold + MD (did i make both these things MUCH worse than they were? yes. bc thats the fun w minecraft lore. its my interpretation baby)

and yeah this is my interpretation of jack's death bc like.. tommy literally did not know that was canon at all AND if u watch the vod he apologizes immediately after soooo T-T

TRIGGER WARNINGS: self-harm, manipulation, derealization, discussions of overdosing, death, implied abuse, gore-ish

George was tired.

He always was, actually, but this particular fatigue weighed down on him like no other. It wasn't the sort that made him want to sleep, that made it difficult to keep his eyes open, no; it was a sort of tiredness that he felt throughout his entire body and mind, and it hung over him like a dense cloud. Despite pinching himself repeatedly, and rubbing at his eyes, the fog wouldn't dissipate, and he found himself trapped within it. He could barely concentrate on the screen, as though his brain was muddled and grey. His limbs were heavy and stiff, and he found that he just couldn't *think* straight.

Looking over at Tommy, he wondered if the boy felt it too.

There was something about how the blond carried himself; how his shoulders were hunched, eyes half-lidded and bored, that made George think that maybe he wasn't alone in whatever plagued him.

Tommy hadn't looked like that before, however. Despite all the things he couldn't remember for the life of him, and the obvious details before his face he still managed to miss, George knew for a fact that Tommy had never looked so tired before.

To be honest, George had never been fond of Tommy; and a large part of that might've been based on the fact that it always took him time to warm up to someone and that he and Tommy had never really spent time together, but the truth was there.

Sure, Tommy had his little gags; the way he was immediately comfortable around everyone and somehow was completely fine poking fun at someone he'd quite literally just met; and how he couldn't get enough of the 'Gogy' bit.

George had never understood the kid, but he *knew* Tommy was anything but quiet and reserved.

Maybe that was why he couldn't quite swallow down the bile at the back of his throat. Maybe it was because *he* was partially responsible.

He could forgive himself for not seeing the signs; for not seeing Dream's true colours. He could forgive himself for never really giving a fuck about Tommy to begin with. He could forgive himself for not visiting; for not even thinking about Tommy.

But for some reason he couldn't forgive himself for not speaking up about his house.

Within mere minutes, it had been rebuilt. Hell, George hadn't even really *cared*. Sure, he was a bit annoyed, maybe a bit vengeful, but seeing it there on the screen; seeing that it was a childish *prank* and the consequences Tommy had suffered because of it, he'd never felt like a bigger dick.

He'd never been the most emotional person. He was actually quite the opposite, but seeing Dream raise his hand towards Tommy, hearing the vile things he spewed, it left a bitter taste in his mouth.

When lies rolled so eloquently off Dream's tongue; preaching about how nobody cared about Tommy and how he was helping him; and watching Tommy *agree*, leaning into the gentle deceiving touches, it made George want to keel over.

All because of a house he'd fixed in minutes.

"George?" Karl began, eyes wide with surprise. The people in the room turned to look at him, and he belatedly realized he could feel droplets landing on his lap.

"George you're... you're *crying*." Quackity whispered, admonished as though he'd never seen anything like it. (He hadn't, actually. No one but Sapnap and Dream had, and George felt suddenly very vulnerable and stupid.)

George looked up, staring into wide grey eyes. Tommy was watching him quietly, lips drawn into a thin pout. his gaze zeroed in on the cut on Tommy's nose and the faded freckles on his cheeks, letting out a tiny pathetic laugh.

"I'm sorry." He rasped out quietly, thankful for the goggles obscuring most of his face.

Tommy quirked a brow as others turned to look at him. He looked left to right, finally coming back to stare at George with a befuddled expression.

"Are you talking to me?" The blond asked, pointing at himself. George laughed again, swallowing back his tears and nodding.

"It was a stupid reason..." George muttered, "I-I'm sorry I didn't say so back when it was happening. I mean... It was a *prank*." He looked up at Tommy, frowning deeply, "and look at what happened because I just went along with whatever Dream said..."

Tommy sucked in a sharp breath, it didn't take a genius to figure out the man was talking about exile, and many people in the room looked taken aback.

But why wouldn't they? The amount of times George and Tommy had spoken could be counted on one hand, and none of them had really been 'positive'. Not only that but George was *crying*. George who laughed at funerals and didn't let his friends talk seriously to him because he was scared of fucking things up.

“Dude shut the fuck up.”

George turned, eyes wide, to where Quackity was sitting. The duck hybrid was glaring, wings hiked up angrily.

“There have been so many times in the past where you could have moped around and blamed yourself for shit, and not once did I ever see you do that. You didn’t even cry when you found out we dumped your best friend in *prison*.” He huffed, “Of everyone involved in exile you’re probably the *last* one who should feel guilty, and don’t go feeling special cause it was your house; Tommy could have chosen anyone. And even if you *had* said something, by the next morning someone else’s house would probably have been robbed or something because we all know Tommy can’t help but get himself into shit.” Quackity sighed, running a hand down his face.

“Cut yourself from the equation, George. Dream wasn’t counting on you staying silent, he was just counting on Tommy stepping out of line.”

George was quiet, silently taking in the statement. He looked up after a few moments.

“So you don’t blame me?” He asked.

“Gogs,” Tommy butted in, staring the older man down, “I mean this in the nicest way possible, but this has nothing to do with you.”

The man in goggles let out a tiny exasperated laugh a few moments later, running a hand through his hair and slumping back in his seat. He looked over at the blond. “Sorry for that too then, I guess.” He muttered quietly, wiping away the tear residue on his cheeks. Tommy let out a loud bark of laughter.

“Leave it to George to make everythingggg about himself.” Sapnap rolled his eyes, a ghost of a smile on his face.

“I wasn’t- You know I-” George’s face grew red, “*shut up Sapnap!*” he hissed, sinking into his seat in shame. The room erupted into laughter. Because apparently that’s what they did at that point. They made the best out of the worst situations.

As the laughter faded, George thought quietly to himself. He didn’t know why he did that. He didn’t know why he’d begun to cry of all things. He could tell you without hesitation that he *wasn’t* an emotional guy and that he *really* didn’t cry without good reason.

But maybe Tommy just did that to people.

Because watching it all unfold, George was floored by how good the kid was. How considerate he was of his older brother, how he’d come into Wilbur’s room, begging him to eat, how he’d stuck with Wilbur to the end because he’d *loved* him, how he’d fought so fiercely in the pit to get back at Techno for Tubbo, how much he cared about L’Manberg and its citizens, how he’d given up the discs for the country, how he’d given a second life in one day for the nation, how he’d taken the full blame for exile, how he didn’t even have the heart to blame most of them for not showing up to visit.

George was starting to realize that Tommy, despite his rashness and bold behaviour, and behind his angry exterior, was a loving and giving *child*. Instead of the selfish and reserved little kid he’d considered him as.

Maybe that was why George felt so guilty. Because even if you’d played the *smallest* part in something as severe as exile, the place and time where Dream had *broken* Tommy, you’d carry the brunt of it on your shoulders too.

George didn’t want to see Tommy hurting anymore.

Unluckily enough for him, the screen started up once more.

He sighed, trying to prepare himself for whatever he was about to see, but in truth, there would never be a way to ready yourself for the things they saw on that wretched monitor.

**Tommy let out a tiny huff, wiping at the sweat on his brow. The reddish glow of the nether hung low on his skin, painting him a deep tan where in the sun he would have looked nearly transparent. Lava bubbled below him, the heat wafting up and clogging his pores. Ghosts screeched in the distance, singing their sad songs.**

“I’ve always thought the Nether was creepy...” Ranboo noted, staring at the screen with uncertainty.

“You’re from the End. Don’t speak on ‘creepy’.” Sapnap replied defensively.

**His pupils were contracted, bags hanging heavy underneath his eyes and making him look half-deranged in the low light. He was smiling shakily as he dug into the side of a large wall of netherack, humming the tune of *Chirp* quietly to himself. Cuts littered his skin, and there were finger-shaped bruises around his wrists and forearms.**

Everyone tried to ignore the elephant in the room, making an effort to move past it. They already knew what had happened in exile, there was no point in dwelling on it; especially not when Tommy so adamantly refused to speak on it.

Despite the fact that it was so uncomfortable to see, as well as painful, they chose not to comment on it.

Things were sure to get better soon.

**Far behind him, a red and blue figure was approaching.**

**“Tommy!” Jack cried out, stepping over a large gap in the netherack, “Oi!”**

Jack froze, eyes going wide. His heart rate picked up almost instantly.

He knew exactly what was about to happen.

**Tommy didn't seem to notice, completely in a daze, still grinning in a haze, head swaying back and forth as he hummed.**

**Jack seemed slightly amused, huffing out a bit of a breathless laugh. "Are you trying to ignore me, yeah?" He joked, moving closer.**

*Turn around.* Jack hissed in his own head, willing his past self to back away. A part of him was surprised the scene had even been considered important enough to be added, that *he* had even been considered important enough to be added, and another part of him was actually quite *glad* the others were going to see.

He was tired of feeling like his anger wasn't justified. It was. He was allowed to hate Tommy if he wanted to. Tommy had *killed him* and never even said sorry, never even apologized.

**Still, Tommy said nothing, completely oblivious and immersed in his mining.**

**The older man was finally close enough, brow cocked in confusion at the lack of response. He frowned, watching the way Tommy completely ignored him, back turned.**

Everyone else seemed mildly intrigued, not knowing what was about to come.

Tommy was cringing, but he didn't seem all that upset. Which was... upsetting in itself. He seemed embarrassed, sure, but where was his guilt? His grief? Why didn't he *care*?

Jack found himself getting all the more angry.

**"Hey," He started, "I'm talking to you, prick." He placed a hand on the boy's shoulder.**

**Tommy seized up immediately, pupils growing even smaller and eyes widening in fear. His whole body tensed as he whirled around, shoving Jack back with all his might.**

Jack knew he should have looked away there. He knew he should have turned around and avoided watching his own death.

But he had to see.

**The issue, however, was that they were on a ledge.**

**Jack's laidback expression quickly morphed to that of shock as he lost his footing, flying into the air, and plummeting below.**

**A large grin spread over Tommy's face as he watched the man fall.**

The tension in the room grew quickly, and almost everyone was on the edge of their seats, shocked.

Puffy looked the most taken aback, eyes wide.

Tommy recoiled at the manic look on his face.

**If Jack screamed, whether in agony or fear, it wasn't heard. There was nothing but the sight and sound of him hitting the lava and slowly sinking below its current, all while staring Tommy in the eyes.**

**Just like that, Jack was gone. He'd been swallowed by the magma, and it looked as if he'd never been there to begin with.**



**For a long, drawn-out moment, Tommy only stared, falling to his knees and continuing to smile eerily.**

And there was silence in the room, as everyone stared at Jack. Because what was there even to say to something like that?

The man shook, with rage or fear or panic well... he wasn't entirely sure. The memory was replaying once again in the back of his mind, over and over and over.

What he was sure of, however, was that all eyes were on him. All these people were looking at *him*... And they looked like they actually cared.

So he spoke.

“Do any of you know what it feels like to fall head-first into lava?” He murmured, scanning the group, voice barely above a whisper. His fists were clenched tightly at his side, and he could swear that despite the constant chill of death that he was *burning*.

Niki was silent at his side, tears streaming down her face as she stared at him sadly.

No one replied, and so he continued.

“You know how- how it gets harder to breathe in the Nether?” He pulled loosely at the collar of his sweater, “Well it's a bit like that. The closer you get to the lava the more your lungs fill up with that noxious gas. You- You can't *breathe*. And it evaporates everything in your body just like that.” He took a shaky breath.

Phil looked less disturbed than the others, but he seemed to be a bit apathetic to things that didn't involve his children, so Jack didn't really think much of it. Of course that meant Technoblade looked less than intrigued, but honestly he was even worse than Phil so that didn't matter much either.

“And then you hit the lava.” Jack swallowed back bile, “And it’s not like hitting water, no, because lava is *dense*, like a fucking rock. Your bones break, they- they *shatter*, and if you’re still alive by that point because maybe you were stupid enough to wear netherite in the Nether or something along those lines, you have to *feel* the heat of it.”

Sapnap seemed a bit taken aback, but perhaps that was what happened when you explained what lava did to someone who *wasn't* born in it to a blaze-born. Beside him, Karl was staring in horror.

“And slowly,” Jack muttered, “*slowly*, your body turns to ash as you sink.”

There was silence, and no one dared to speak, and that surprised him; because when was the last time there’d been genuine contemplative silence after he spoke? When was the last time that someone had *cared* about what he had to say?

What surprised Jack the most, however, was the expression on Tommy’s face.

The blond looked positively nauseous, ready to keel over. His face was even paler than before, and his wide eyes were staring holes into Jack’s soul.

“...How do you know that?” Tommy whispered, something indecipherable in his tone. He looked... *terrified*.

“What the fuck do you mean ‘how do I know that’?” Jack grit his teeth, growing slightly defensive, “You just fucking watched me go through it!” He gestured at the screen.

Tommy swallowed thickly, shaking his head and furrowing his brow. “No...” He muttered, looking down at the ground in fear before staring back up and leveling Jack with a hard glare, “you’re- you’re lying! You have to be! You had fire resistance!”

“Who the fuck told you that!?”

“You did!” Tommy cried back, fists clenched tightly.

“When!?” Jack demanded, completely lost, “When on *earth* did I bloody say that!?”

“Directly after this!” Tommy pointed angrily at the screen, “Don’t- Don’t *lie* to me Jack I’ve had enough of that shit, okay? Don’t you fuckin... don’t *do this to me* !” He cursed, but the end of his line broke into a pained laugh.

Jack narrowed his eyes, ready to refute, when Puffy raised a hand.

“Watch.” She instructed firmly, “It’ll explain whatever the hell’s going on here.” And even she seemed to be unsure, a bit shaky in her ways and a weariness in her tone.

Tommy, apparently, had no problem turning back, because he seemed so sure that whatever was next would prove his point, but it was taking everything within Jack not to stand up and start screaming.

This was why he hated Tommy. Because Tommy didn’t fucking *listen*. He never said sorry, he *killed him* and never said sorry, and still had a rebuttal! Why did he look so fucking pathetic and scared when it was *Jack* who had died? Why was he making it about himself?

Still, Jack forced himself to clamp his mouth shut, staring forward at the screen.

**And then Tommy began to laugh.**

**Loud and ugly laughter bubbled up from inside him, coming out in short bursts as he cackled and gasped for air. His hands, battered and bloody, came to grip at his face, pulling down and scratching at his pale skin. Large gashes opened up, rivulets of blood dripping down his chin.**

Tubbo and Ranboo alike recoiled at the action, and Tommy only glared angrily at the screen.

**He choked and gurgled on his own spit, pressing his forehead down into the hot netherack and screeching with laughter.**

Jack paused, completely taken aback by the reaction.

He'd seen Tommy's smile, yes, and assumed there was laughter afterward. But not this sort. He'd thought Tommy would have laughed like usual and called him dumb, not do whatever *this* was.

It was actually extremely jarring to watch, and Jack felt highly uncomfortable at the whole thing.

**And just as soon as it started up, he stopped; going completely and utterly silent.**

Phil sent a concerned glance toward his youngest, looking physically ill.

**A loud silence hung in the air. Tommy crawled over to the edge and stared down at where Jack had been just moments before, smile falling from his face. Blood dripped and dropped onto the ground, hissing and evaporating as it did, leaving a metallic smell behind.**

It was fucking gruesome, and Karl gagged quietly, looking away.

**“...Why did I do that?” He whispered into the open air, hands coming up to curl around his arms. He hugged himself tightly, looking as though he was about to be sick. “Did I? Did I just do that?”**

Jack frowned skeptically; if Tommy was so concerned then why hadn't there been an apology?

**"There's no way." He muttered, staring down, "I didn't- I didn't *mean to...*"**

"Yeah okay," Jack snorted, "you 'didn't mean' to push me into the lava. Sure."

Tommy was silent for what felt like eons, staring quietly at him.

"You snuck up on me." The blond said quietly, point blank, "I thought you were Dream."

Jack was quiet, eyes widening by just a fraction before he leveled Tommy with a scowl.  
"Whatever."

**Wordlessly, he stood. He clumsily gathered himself and all but bolted in the direction of the portal, blood and tears mixing as he panted.**

**When he made it to the overworld, it was quiet. Save for the wind rustling in the branches of the old trees and the birds chirping. The sun was setting, a golden light splaying out onto his face.**

**Tommy began to pace, muttering quietly to himself and chewing his bottom lip raw, blood staining his teeth as he did. He subconsciously began to pick at the scabs on his arms, breathing quickly elevating once more.**

Puffy frowned, heart aching for the boy but also worrying for Jack. She wasn't exactly sure what was going on.

**"Why did I do that?" He whined, hugging himself tighter, "That wasn't... That couldn't have been real."**

Jack glared at the screen, trying to ignore the tugging at his chest, trying to ignore that the reason he'd been so upset in the first place was that he'd thought Tommy hadn't cared. But it didn't matter, did it? Because even if Tommy *did* care that much, he'd never apologized.

**He paused, staring back into the portal, eyes murky and distant, before snapping back to reality.**

**“No no no no....” Tears pricked at the corner of his eyes, “No I don’t... *No*... It- It has to be my head messing with me again or- or...”**

**He hunched in on himself, still mumbling incoherent things to himself, when there was the sound of a twig breaking to his left. His head perked up, eyes wide and bloodshot, and he let his arms fall to his side.**

The tension in the room picked up, and even Jack, despite his avid anger towards Tommy, felt himself worrying that Dream had entered the scene.

If there was one shared opinion in the room, it was that they all *hated* Dream.

**“Hello?” He called out shakily, scanning the trees, “Dream...?”**

**“Tommy?” A voice that was absolutely *not* Dream’s called back. Tommy stiffened, mouth clamping shut.**

Jack went very still, narrowing his eyes at the screen.

**Jack poked his head out from behind a tree, slowly making his way out until he was completely visible. He looked slightly disheveled, but nothing else seemed to be out of the ordinary.**

**Tommy blanched almost instantly. “...Jack?” He whispered, voice cracking and eyes glassy. “Jack is that- is that *you*?”**

Jack shifted uncomfortably in his seat, staring dumbfounded.

**“Well, who else would I be, dickhead?” Jack rolled his eyes.**

*It sounded just like him.*

**“No but- but I *pushed* you. I- I *killed* you!” Tommy stammered, brows furrowed.**

**Jack paused for a moment, looking the boy up and down. The stripes on his hoodie were in the wrong order.**

It was... It was him but *wrong*. Just in little ways. Like how the freckle under his chin wasn't there, or how his eyes were perfectly even despite the fact that his own were actually slightly slanted towards the left, or how the small scratch in his left lens was missing.

All little things Tommy had never noticed. All little things Jack knew too well.

**“I had fire res.” He decided on finally, looking unperturbed, “but that doesn't mean it wasn't a total dick move.” He hissed, noticing the tension loosening in Tommy's form.**

*Oh.* An uncertain weight settled in Jack's stomach, and he grit his teeth. Tommy looked slightly triumphant, but more than anything, he looked saddened.

**“I'm sorry,” Tommy replied at once, “I am so *so* sorry. You- you just *startled* me man, and I've been alone with *Dream* for so long that I- I just...” He sighed, rubbing at his aching temple. “...I'm sorry, Jack. I didn't mean to hurt you.”**

Jack sucked in a sharp breath, feeling something prick at his eyes. He cursed silently, removing his glasses to wipe at them.

All he'd ever wanted was an apology. All he'd ever wanted was for Tommy to care.

"It's not fair," he shook his head, laughing bitterly as he looked down, "It's not fair!"

Puffy frowned deeply, reaching out a tentative hand. "Jack..."

"Because now I don't-" he choked on his words, ignoring the looks he was getting as he glared at Tommy, "*I don't get to be mad at you anymore!*"

Tommy blinked, furrowing his brow. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"You apologized!" Jack all but screamed, voice cracking, "You- I mean- that never happened, Tommy!"

The blond blanched, eyes widening. "...What?" He whispered.

"That wasn't real." Jack hissed, "*I died*, Tommy! You imagined that entire conversation!"

Tommy looked appalled, sweating profusely and shaking his head. *No. No. No. No.*

"But I don't get to be mad because... because you *did* apologize to me, you just didn't apologize to *me!*"

"Jack, that's enough." Puffy stood abruptly, a sour look on her face. She spared a single glance at where Tommy was sitting, the boy looking close to throwing up, and then focused all her attention on the older man.



“What we just saw does *not* mean you don’t get to be angry, Jack.” She frowned, tilting her head at him sadly, “What you went through was traumatic, and whether or not Tommy meant to doesn’t change the fact that he did it.”

Tommy flinched slightly at the words, muttering more incoherent things to himself.

Jack swallowed thickly, staring up at her. “...But he- he *apologized*,” he managed, barely getting his voice above a whisper, “I spent so long being so mad that he never apologized but he *did* Puffy. He *cared*.”

“Jack...” Puffy murmured, looking pained, “Is that really all you ever wanted?”

He stared at her for a moment, unmoving, before cursing quietly as he began to cry softly. He placed his head in his hands, shoulders shaking.

‘*Switch spots with me*’ Puffy mouthed to Niki. The pink-haired girl sniffled, nodding and standing from her seat as the two made an awkward shuffle to exchange places.

Puffy seated herself down, turning slightly so that she was facing Jack. She frowned deeply, tearing up herself as she watched him cry.

“Jack, honey,” she began, “you deserve *so much more* than just to be acknowledged, okay?” She shifted slightly closer, staring sadly. He whined quietly into his hands, wiping at his tears desperately.

“I- I’m just so tired of being *alone*, Puffy.” He choked out, “And I don’t want to be angry anymore. I’m *tired*.”

Everyone else was quiet, silently eavesdropping. What else was there to do but listen?

Puffy hummed quietly, not replying as he continued to cry. She couldn't help but be reminded of someone else at his words.

Tommy peered at them quietly, wide grey eyes staring them down. Jack sniffled loudly, raising his head and meeting the gaze almost immediately. He scowled.

"I'm sorry," Tommy blurted out, heart practically beating out of his chest, "Jack I am so so so so so-"

"Stop it," Jack hissed, eyes narrowed, "I *know* you're sorry. That's the issue."

"No but I'm *really truly* sorry, Jack." Tommy pressed, "Like- like I don't know how to show you I mean it I mean I- I *killed* you-"

"Stop it!" Jack cried, affronted, "Step one to not pissing me off more would be not bringing up the fact that you fucking killed me, yeah!?"

Tommy nodded enthusiastically, mouth clamped shut. Jack sighed, running a hand over his face.

"For fuck's sake..." He muttered.

When he looked back over, Tommy was still staring at him.

"Look," He began, flexing his hands out, "I'm... Well like- *Ugh!* I just... I didn't know it was an accident... and I didn't know you apologized, or at least *tried to* apologize." He pursed his lips, "I guess I never thought about what I'd say to your apology 'cause I never thought you'd actually y'know... do it."

"But I did." The blond pointed out.

“But you did.” Jack affirmed, nodding. “But... I think- I think I’m still angry at you.”

There was a long, drawn-out silence, and for a moment everyone in the room feared that Tommy was going to break out into a loud bitter spiel.

“Okay.”

Jack nearly did a double take, furrowing his brow and leaning forwards as he stared across the rows. “...What?”

“Look Jack,” Tommy sighed, “if there’s one thing I know, it’s being angry. And if you did to me what I did to you, I would be fuckin *pissed*.” He huffed, “I’d probably like... try to kill you or something!”

Jack laughed nervously.

“So like, what I’m saying is that I- I get it.” the blond muttered, cheeks growing slightly red, “it’s understandable or whatever.”

Jack stared, mouth agape for just a moment, before he smiled softly. “Thanks, Tom.” He said softly, feeling a warmth in his chest he hadn’t felt in a *long* time.

“Maybe after some time, you guys can go back to being friends!” Tubbo chimed in, grinning wide.

“Let’s not get ahead of ourselves, Tubs.” Tommy made a face, “He’s still,” he gestured vaguely in Jack’s direction, “Jack Manifold, y’know?”

Jack scowled.

“Does everything nice you say have to be followed by something dickish?” He demanded, glaring. Tommy didn’t reply, only laughing loudly.

And normally, that was where Jack would’ve gotten angry. He probably would’ve thrown a fit or, well, pushed his rage down, saving it for later. But after the conversation he’d just had, it suddenly felt as though a weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

He was still angry, of course, and the flames of the Nether would never quite stop in their desperate attempts to swallow him once more, but he felt lighter.

He felt better than he had in a very long time.

**Jack looked him up and down, not saying a word.**

**“Whatever. Just be more careful next time.” He muttered.**

**Tommy beamed as the screen went dark.**

“Wow, Hallucifold really let you off the hook, huh?” Fundy noted.

“That’s how you know he’s not me...” Jack muttered, rolling his eyes.

**It was midday in Logstedshire, the sun beating down as the grass blew gently in the breeze. Flowers littered the fields, the blood of the cattle and other animals finally having been washed away from the rain.**

**Things were looking better.**

**Dream was standing still next to Tnret, as though he was waiting for something. He wore his usual full set of Netherite armour, tapping his foot expectantly.**

The people in the room recoiled at the sight of the man. Tubbo and Ranboo alike grew defensive at the sight of the man, looking over at Tommy who seemed to be... staring almost fondly at the screen.

The two older teens shared a concerned glance.

**Tommy laughed loudly as he came into view, walking up the path. Despite his faded colours, the blond hair and red shirt were unmistakable. Beside him was a man who looked eerily similar to Dream. He was shorter in stature, but he wore the same outfit. His mask, however, was painted to look like the Mexican flag, and his hair was a dark almost black whereas Dream's was a light brown.**

“Uhhhh, who the fuck is that?” Quackity questioned, staring at the screen with wide eyes.

“You’ve never met Mexican Dream?” George asked, leaning over.

“Uh... No?” The duck hybrid shook his head.

“Well, he’s great!” Sapnap butted in, smiling wide, “Kinda weird sometimes but I think you guys would get along! We should introduce you to him!”

“Haven’t seen him in a while though...” Karl hummed, deep in thought.

Tommy swallowed thickly, feeling bile rise in his throat. He remained silent.

**For some reason, Tommy didn’t seem to pay Dream any mind, more focused on the man beside him. Whatever he’d said had the blond in a fit of laughter, clutching his stomach.**

**Dream shifted at the sight of the newcomer, quickly making his way down to greet them.**

**“Tommy!” He cried out, approaching the duo.**

Sam glared, shoulders hiking up.

*Leave. Stay away from him.*

**Tommy almost instantly tensed, the smile falling from his face before he plastered it right back up, shooting Dream a shaky grin. The third man looked down at him, though his expression was unreadable due to the mask.**

**“H-Hey Dream!” The youngest greeted, making tiny finger guns. “What’s up Big D?”**

Phil sneered at the screen, looking over to his youngest.

**Dream didn’t reply, looking over at the other man.**

**“What’s going on here?” He asked, looking between the two.**

**“This is Mexican Dream!” Tommy grinned wide, gesturing to the man, Mexican Dream, “MD for short!” He spared Dream a glance, “kinda funny that he’s got ‘Dream’ in his name, huh? Would you two happen to be long-lost brothers or something?”**

**MD was silent, staring at Dream blankly.**

“I don’t think they like each other very much.” Niki noted.

“Nah, they fought *a lot* a while back.” Sapnap nodded.

“Okay, seriously where the fuck was I during this?” Quackity demanded.

**“We’re... acquainted.” Dream managed, curling and uncurling his fists at his side.**

**“Well, that’s great then!” Tommy grinned wide, “You two already know each other! Because Dream my man, this dude here, my pal MD? He’s ‘omeless.”**

“Could have stayed in El Rapids...” Karl muttered, pouting slightly.

Quackity tensed at the mention, looking over at his fiancée with narrowed eyes, though it went unnoticed.

**“It’s true,” MD nodded, “So sad, man.”**

**Dream said nothing, only staring.**

**“So I was like,” Tommy waved his hand around in the air vaguely, “figuring I could maybe build him a place here?” He paused, “If it’s okay with you, of course!” He added in a slight panic.**

Puffy glared, crossing her arms. As if Dream had any jurisdiction over Logstedshire; over *Tommy*.

**The tallest of the three looked MD up and down, and then looked over at Tommy. He sighed. “I guess there’s no issue with it...” He agreed, “And I *do* want you to have more**

friends.”

“Well he’s definitely lying there,” Techno hummed.

**“Yes!” Tommy cried excitedly, jumping in the air. As he landed he winced slightly, putting pressure on his ribs for just a moment before lighting back up. He made a beeline for the left field, gesturing for MD to follow.**

Ranboo’s heart twisted slightly at the action, not liking the way Tommy seemed to be injured. Especially somewhere as delicate and painful as his ribcage.

**Dream watched them quietly as they did, gaze never leaving the two.**

**When they were finally out of earshot, Tommy did a little spin in the grass. He kicked up some dirt before pointing to a flat space on the ground and beginning to ramble about what sort of shack they were going to build.**

Quackity smiled fondly at the baseless chatter, though when he looked over at his Tommy, the smile vanished.

Tommy was staring wide-eyed at the screen, brows furrowed as though he was in pain.

**MD, however, seemed more focused on what was behind them. He interrupted Tommy, grabbing the boy by the wrist only to instantly let go when the blond flinched violently. Underneath his mask, he frowned.**

Phil’s heart broke in two at the sight, and he spared another glance towards Tommy. He wanted nothing more than to rush over and scoop up his son, to hold him tight and never let go, but he knew it was out of the question.

**Tommy tried to play it off, laughing awkwardly. “What’s on your mind, Big M?”**



**“Is he like your fuckin Dad or something?” MD whispered quietly, staring over at Dream.**

The avian went still, gritting his teeth and clenching his fists as he watched.

**“What?” Tommy blinked in surprise, “No! No no no no...” He looked to be deep in thought for a moment before he returned, “he’s like... borderline my owner, I guess.” He shrugged, seemingly unbothered.**

“*Tommy!*” Ranboo cried, eyes wide as he swiveled in his seat, getting a good look at the blond. Everyone else in the room seemed equally as shocked and appalled.

Tommy laughed nervously, giving the enderman hybrid an awkward grin. “Ello Ranboo.”

“Tommy...” Ranboo began quietly, “How could you say that? Did you- *do you* actually believe that?”

“Well... yeah?” The blond huffed out a laugh, “I don’t see what the big deal is, I was just stating facts- what the hell is wrong with all of you?”

He scanned the room, seeing the wide-eyed stares and the tears in their gazes. He scowled.

“Not this pity shit again,” He groaned, “Don’t fuckin look at me like that!” he whined, throwing his head back.

“Tommy it’s not pity it’s- it’s *genuine concern*.” Sam pressed, brows creased, “You can’t honestly think referring to Dream as your *owner* is in any way normal, right?”

Tommy was silent, staring at the ground.

“Tommy,” Puffy began softly, “Dream wasn’t your owner, he wasn’t your friend, he was your abu-”

“*Woah!*” Tommy cut in with a rushed and forced laugh, grinning painfully at them all as he put his hands up, “Kinda stepping into territory I told you to stay the fuck out of, yeah?”

“Tommy-”

“LaLaLaLa~ Can’t hear youuu~”

“*Tommy-*”

“Oh?” Tommy perked up, looking thoughtfully towards the ceiling, “The magic Drista TV is starting up again? Well, we better stop talking and watch! Wouldn’t want to miss that, hmmmm?” He opened his eyes as wide as he could, staring the older woman down.

Puffy pursed her lips, but let him have his way all the same.

**“Uh huh...” Beneath his mask, MD narrowed his eyes. He wasn’t quite sure what to say to that statement.**

**“Anyways, let’s get back to work!” Tommy chirped, chipper as ever, “I want you to have somewhere cozy to sleep tonight!”**

The nonchalance towards the fact that he’d just referred to Dream as his *owner* of all things put almost all of them on edge.

**Their chatter faded into the background as they worked, Tommy gesturing wildly into the air and getting offended when MD made playful jabs at him.**

**Up on the hill, Dream watched over them quietly.**

“Fucking creep...” Fundy muttered, arms crossed. Tommy laughed loudly.

“Well, this Mexican Dream fellow seems nice.” Phil nodded, not seeing the way his youngest instantly paled.

“Darkness cannot exist without light.” Karl added.

“Are you trying to imply that this Mexican Dream guy is the Anti-Dream?” Techno cocked a brow.

“That’s exactly what I’m saying.” The time traveler grinned.

Wordlessly, the scene on the screen shifted, and they all turned their attention towards it.

**It was dark outside, the tiny shack Tommy had built for his friend being lit by a single lantern in the middle of the floor. The two were both on the ground, sitting on the wooden floorboards, legs crossed. The crickets chirped just outside the walls.**

Karl smiled at the domestic scene, feeling a bit of hope blossom in his chest.

Mexican Dream was a good guy; he’d keep Tommy safe.

**“No no no,” MD shook his head, “you gotta fold it like this.” He held out a tiny piece of pink paper, bringing it into the light of the lantern.**

**“Like this?” Tommy questioned, sticking out his tongue slightly as he folded his own blue paper completely wrong.**

“Are you guys doing origami?” Tubbo tilted his head.

Tommy laughed sadly, nodding his head. “Yeah, MD had a shit ton of origami paper on him. Said it calmed him or whatever.”

**“No man!” the older one laughed, “what the hell is that?”**

***“Well I dunno, Big M, I just followed your instructions!”*** Tommy replied in a gravelly joking tone.

Tommy felt his chest tighten as he watched.

**The two of them erupted into laughter, only stopping when MD reached over, snatching the crumpled paper from Tommy’s hand and throwing it in the trash.**

**“That’s enough origami for tonight.” He declared.**

**“What the hell man!?” Tommy cried out, “I almost had my crane ready to go!”**

“That was definitely *not* a crane.” George added, staring skeptically.

“Oh piss off!”

**“Sureee you did.” Mexican Dream rolled his eyes, laughing when Tommy flipped him off.**

**They lapsed into a comfortable silence for just a moment before the older man looked up, staring at the blond.**

**“Thomas?” He began, a certain serious lilt in his tone.**

Karl, George, and Sapnap alike all furrowed their brows. They’d never heard him like that.

**“Yeah?” Tommy tilted his head, blue-grey eyes shining in the low glow of the flame from the lantern.**

Niki swallowed back something bitter at the sight of the boy in the light; trying to ignore the tears in his clothes and the bags beneath his eyes.

**“Are you... Do you see anything wrong with the way that Dream guy treats you?” MD asked gently.**

*Yes!* Puffy cheered internally, a small smile gracing her features.

**Tommy wrinkled his nose, furrowing his brow and shooting the shorter a look.  
“Wrong? What are you talking about?”**

**Mexican Dream sighed, running a hand through the hair behind his mask. “I mean like, it’s not normal, dude. He... he *hits* you, and he takes your things, man. That’s not right.”**

*Keep going. Keep going!*

**The blond teen narrowed his eyes, shoulders hiking up slightly. “He- He does that to *discipline* me. There’s a reason no one comes to visit, you know? I gotta learn a lesson or**

**two.”**

“Tommy,” Phil began, “what the fuck are you talking about?”

The young blond looked back abashedly at his father. He was embarrassed. It was easier to see then, but in the moment it hadn't *felt* or even *sounded* like abuse to him.

They probably all thought he was fucking weak and stupid.

“It's nothing.” He dismissed, “I'm over it now.”

“Are you really?” Tubbo questioned, in that stupid casual tone that made Tommy want to wring his stupid little goat neck.

“Yes,” he hissed.

“Cause you know none of that was true, yeah? Like he was just saying that. None of it was tr-”

“Yes, *Tubbo*,” Tommy managed through grit teeth, “I'm aware.”

“Just checking.” Tubbo shrugged.

**Despite the mask covering his features, MD looked almost... angry.**

**“And he's my friend!” Tommy added enthusiastically, “he's not doing it to hurt me! He doesn't even want to do it!”**

“Uh...”

“Shut your mouth, fox boy.” Tommy glared, cheeks tinged red with embarrassment.

**“What about this Tubbo guy you always talk about?” The older man asked, “he’s your friend, yeah? Did he ever do this to you?”**

Tubbo went still.

**Tommy paused, swallowing thickly. Dream’s voice echoed in his head.**

***“Tubbo? He doesn’t care about you, Tommy! That’s why he doesn’t do this! He doesn’t care about you getting better, he doesn’t care!”***

The ram-hybrid grit his teeth, glaring at the screen and once again pushing all his anger deep *deep* down.

**“I think I’m done for tonight, actually.” Tommy smiled softly, rising from his spot on the floor and moving towards the door, “I’ll catch you tomorrow, Big M.”**

And that always happened. That always fucking happened! Tommy would always shut down whenever Tubbo was brought up. He just... ended conversations without batting an eye.

Tubbo wasn’t sure how to feel about it.

**Before he could get a reply, Tommy shut the door behind him, leaving MD alone in the tiny shack. The man looked down at the ground.**

**“I’m not gonna let that bastard get away with this...” He muttered quietly to the empty hut.**

**The screen went dark.**

“Okay so *maybe* he’s the Anti-Dream.” Fundy piped up, looking thoughtful. Karl grinned.

Techno felt an odd wave of unease settle over him. The people in the room didn’t seem to realize that despite all their newfound hope, they still knew exactly how things had panned out.

Well, maybe that was a bit unfair. Technoblade actually had an upper hand. He’d seen Tommy directly after exile, and he could say with confidence that if this Mexican Dream guy had stuck around till the end, Tommy wouldn’t have looked as bad as he did when he’d holed up in Techno’s basement.

Something bad was coming, and if Tommy’s silence and body language was anything to go off of, it wouldn’t be pretty.

Still, he let himself go back to watching the screen.

**It was sunny on the beach, and both Tommy and Mexican Dream were standing proudly on the sand, watching the tide come in. Dream was nowhere to be found.**

“Cheers to that...” Quackity muttered quietly.

**“So what’s the plan for today, Thomas?” MD asked, looking over at the boy. Tommy wavered slightly under his gaze, smiling shakily.**

**“Well uh- if I’m allowed I was thinking-”**



**“Hold up,” the older man held a hand up, interrupting him, “if you’re *allowed*? Dude, this is *your* home. You can do whatever you want!”**

“You know I’m just loving this guy more and more.” Puffy smirked.

**Tommy paused, actually taking what MD had said into account. He scrunched his face together, thinking deeply.**

**“Yeah...” He nodded pensively, “Yeah! What the fuck am I saying *allowed*? I’m a big man! I do what I want!”**

A collective relief washed over almost the entirety of the group. Seeing a bit of *Tommy* come back to life after watching so much die... well it was more than needed.

**“Yeahh!” Mexican Dream cried excitedly, cheering the boy on, “Attaboy!”**

**Tommy grinned confidently, putting his hands on his hips and staring out at the horizon. “Ohhhhh MD,” He fake-wobbled, “I’m getting my pep back bitch!” He beamed.**

Ranboo smiled softly at the screen. Tubbo mirrored his expression.

They missed Tommy’s antics.

**“So what are we doing today?” Mexican Dream asked, a happy lilt in his voice, he was nearly bouncing on his heels.**

**“We’re gonna go bug-catching!” Tommy fist-pumped, grinning widely.**

“Awwww.” Puffy cooed.

“Stop it!” Tommy cried, cheeks going red, “Bug catching is a *manly* activity!”

**“Fantastic! I love it!” MD cheered, just as ready to go.**

**Tommy was practically dancing in place, and some of the blues had returned to his eyes. He couldn’t keep the smile off of his face, eyes crinkling at the edges.**

Phil couldn’t help but grin at that.

His son always had the most beautiful smile.

**“Just promise me one thing before we go,” Mexican Dream began, growing slightly serious, causing Tommy to tilt his head, smile slipping just barely, “promise me next time you see Dream, you’ll tell him what you’re doing for the day, not ask him... Yeah?”**

*Yes yes yes!* Puffy cheered, beaming.

**Tommy was silent for a moment, looking contemplative before he nodded, a genuine smile on his face.**

**“Okay,” he agreed, “anything for you Big M.”**

**Behind his mask, Mexican Dream grinned wide.**

**Neither of them spotted the green figure watching them from the woods.**

“Oh Jesus...” Sapnap pulled back from the screen.

Niki shifted uncomfortably in her seat.

Tommy frowned; he’d never noticed that before.

Were there other points in time where Dream had been watching him like that?

*“He was only ever here to watch me.”*

**After a long, *long* day of bug hunting, the two returned to Logstedshire; both aching and tired, but happy nonetheless. The sun was setting, and everything seemed rather... *good*.**

**While they’d freed all the bugs they’d caught, one little jumping spider with wide curious eyes and covered head to toe in peach fuzz had latched onto Tommy and refused to let go; always somehow appearing right back on his shoulder no matter how many flowers or trees they placed her down on.**

**Tommy had decided to name her Blue. Apparently Blue had just about every intention of coming back with them.**

“She’s... cute.” Puffy tried, grinning awkwardly.

“She’s ugly as hell, actually.” Fundy muttered.

*“Fundy!”* Phil hissed.

None of them had noticed the way Tommy seized up as he stared at the screen.

**When they got back, however, Dream was waiting, lounging just outside the area.**

The mood dampened immediately.

**Instantly, Tommy tensed at the sight of the man, and Blue crawled away, hiding in his hair; almost as if she could feel something sinister emanating from the man.**

“Oh my god, even the bugs know.” Karl whispered.

“What?” George shot him an amused glance.

“You’re right!” Fundy cried, nearly launching from his seat.

“What are you two talking about?” Sam questioned.

“Okay so like you know when storms or bad things are coming? And how bugs and animals feel it first? Like- Like they can just tell?” Karl started, eyes wide with enthusiasm.

A few of them nodded unsurely.

“Basically, Blue, our disgusting friend over there, literally sensed Dream like a fucking *storm* and went to hide!” Fundy added, grinning, “Even the bugs know he’s bad news!”

“I think you’re getting a bit ahead of yourself.” Niki said, trying to hide an amused smile.

“No, I'm *telling* you! It's real!” Fundy pressed, Karl nodding quickly with him.

“That's not really important though.” Phil noted.

“To *you* maybe.” The two glared.

Tommy was dead silent, both Ranboo and Tubbo seemed to have noticed, staring at him with concern.

**Mexican Dream took a step forward, shielding the young boy slightly.**

**“Hi Dream!” Tommy greeted, waving a hand, “What's up?”**

**The man in question was silent, and the mask covering his face made it hard to understand or tell what he might've been thinking. He tilted his chin up, and somehow it was easy to tell that he was looking down on them instead of up.**

**“I came by this morning,” He said finally, taking a step forward, “you know, like I always do... but you weren't there, Tommy.”**

And oh. Things weren't going to be pretty... were they?

Techno prepared himself for the worst.

**Tommy took a step back, eyes wide and hands trembling. He frowned deeply. “I-I'm sorry Dream I... I just wanted to show MD around... yeah?”**

***“And he doesn’t answer to you, man.” Mexican Dream hissed, puffing out his chest.***

“Yup!” Sapnap cried excitedly, earning a few amused huffs.

Dream sighed, shaking his head. ***“I was afraid of this.”*** He muttered quietly.

***“What?” Tommy looked back and forth between the two Dreams, “What do you mean? What’s happening?”***

***“He’s manipulating you, Tommy.” Dream replied, point blank, “We have a *routine*, we have a *schedule* dedicated to bettering you, and he took you away from it!”***

“What a fucking *asshole!*” Quackity cried, eyes wide.

Tubbo and Ranboo glared at the screen.

**Tommy frowned, looking over at the shorter man. MD nodded once at him, and he swallowed thickly, taking a deep breath.**

A collective excitement grouped them all together. Because this was it, wasn’t it? Tommy would stand up to Dream and put an end to everything, *finally*.

***“Dream,” he began, voice trembling,***

*Yes! Yes! Yes!*

***“I don’t think-”***

**“Think?” Dream repeated, “Oh that’s rich coming from you.” he laughed, “Were you thinking when you challenged me to a duel for L’Manberg? Were you thinking when you pressed that button in the control room?” He took a step forward, Tommy taking one back, “Were you thinking when you burnt down George’s house? Huh?”**

**Tommy paled drastically, putting up his hands to defend himself. His breathing picked up, and he could feel tears pricking at his vision.**

*No. Phil thought with wide eyes, heart sinking immediately. No this can't be happening.*

**“Hey man, back the fuck up!” MD hissed, stepping between the two. Tommy looked up, shocked.**

A wave of hope passed through them. Because surely, *surely*, Dream would back down if there was someone to defend Tommy... right?

**“This doesn’t concern you.” Dream spat, voice dangerously low. He turned back to Tommy. “Tommy, come on, you can’t trust this guy. He’s not your friend! Not like I am.”**

**“That’s what makes him trustworthy.” Fundy muttered.**

**The blond teen looked close to being ill, gaze flicking between the two men. The sun had almost completely set, and Blue was nervously scurrying around on top of his head, hidden beneath his hair.**

**“Oh that’s it,” MD growled, “I’ve fuckin had enough of you man!” He summoned a sword from his inventory, holding it tight.**

Tubbo let out a shocked laugh, not having been expecting the action.

Tommy, however, looked close to throwing up.

**Dream laughed quietly to himself, unhooking *Nightmare* from his belt.**

**“Let’s go.” He grinned.**

**And just like that, they were at each other’s throats. Weapons clanging together as they fought tooth and nail.**

**Tommy was forced to take a step back, wide-eyed and in a daze.**

**When he came back to reality, it was nearly too late.**

**“Stop!” He cried out, running at the two, “Stop it!”**

**“Don’t get in the middle of the fight, you idiot!” Jack hissed.**

**He looked over in confusion when he received no reply.**

**“Stay away, Tommy!” MD exclaimed through gritted teeth, “It’s not safe!” He parried a blow from *Nightmare*, straining under the weight.**

**And just like that, in mere seconds, it happened.**

**Tommy watched with wide eyes as Dream pulled back, raising his axe once more, seeing that MD didn’t have time to block the blow.**



**The shorter man's body fell to the grass, thumping as he went completely still; *Nightmare* lodged tightly in his chest. Dream placed a foot on his shoulder, grunting as he ripped the axe out of its spot, blood spurting everywhere.**

The room was completely silent.

All of their hope had been sucked away.

They stared in horror, completely dumbfounded.

**“*NO!*” Tommy shrieked, surging forward. He fell to his knees beside the man, hands hovering uselessly over the gaping wound in his chest. “No no no no no no...”**

**He placed his hands over the punctured area, pressing deeply. “MD?” He cried out, “MD speak to me!”**

**But his hands merely sunk into the man's chest, the wound too large, and Mexican Dream was eerily still.**

**“No...” Tommy muttered, eyes going wide, “*No!*”**

That time it wasn't only Karl and Niki who had to turn away. Many of them had to avoid watching as Tommy went almost elbow-deep into the man's chest.

“Oh my fucking god...” Phil whispered, eyes wide.

Tommy was completely silent, shoulders shaking and teeth grit so tightly he was worried they might just fall out.

**Behind him, Dream approached once more.**

“What the fuck does he think he’s doing!?” Quackity exclaimed.

**“Tommy, I’m so sorry...” He whispered.**

**Instantly, Tommy whirled around, rising to his feet. There was a spark in his eyes that hadn’t been there in quite some time. Blood coated his hands, going almost halfway up his forearms as it dripped down into the grass.**

**“You’re *sorry*?” He demanded, taking a step forward, “You’re *sorry*!?” He turned back to the body, gesturing furiously, “*You killed him, Dream!*”**

And where before there would have been joy or perhaps a vindictive victorious feeling at seeing Tommy scream back at Dream, by then they could only watch in complete shock.

**Dream didn’t reply, only staring down at the body. A large puddle of blood was pooling beneath Mexican Dream’s corpse, and Tommy was panting, chest heaving at the outburst as tears streamed down his face.**

**“Tommy...” Dream began, “What are you talking about?”**

Tubbo leaned forward, fully taken aback by the words.

**Tommy went very still, slowly turning to look at the taller man. He stared down at the blood on his hands, and then back at Dream. “...What?” He croaked, voice cracking.**

**“Tommy I didn’t- I didn’t *kill him*!” Dream laughed incredulously, “We were- we were having a spat, sure, but I didn’t do anything to hurt him!”**

“He put an *axe* through his *chest!*” Fundy all but screamed, gesturing widely.

**The blond gazed over at the corpse bespeckled in blood.**

“Oh Tommy...” Puffy whispered, tears streaming down her face.

**“The fuck are you talking about?” He spat quietly.**

**“Are you feeling okay, Tommy?” The masked man tilted his head, “I think you need to sit down-”**

**“No!” Tommy backed away, raising his hands to defend himself, “What I *need* is for you to explain whatever the hell you’re saying, Dream!”**

**Blue was practically shaking in his hair.**

**“I...” The green-clad man looked down at the body. “Tommy, he died of a drug overdose. I didn’t lay a hand on him.”**

Tubbo rolled his eyes. Did Dream really think that was going to work when he had literally *did it* in front of Tommy?

**Tommy paused, raising his hands coated in blood to eye level. He glared angrily. “Very funny.” He growled.**

**“No Tommy, I’m serious!” Dream exclaimed, voice cracking slightly, as though he was distraught, “Are you- are you *seeing things* again?”**

Techno narrowed his eyes.

**The teen blanched, eyes going wide. He stood very still for a moment, going through the motions in his head. “No.” He shook his head, “No Dream I’m- I’m quite literally *covered* in his blood right now! I-”**

Niki frowned deeply, feeling a tug in her chest.

**“What blood?”**

**Tommy froze completely, staring at the masked man in complete shock and disbelief.**

**“...What?”**

Ranboo was hunched over, covered in tiny particles; all of them screaming in agony and outrage.

**“Tommy,” Dream reached out, guiding him into a sitting position on the ground, “Tommy *look at me*” he stressed, “there’s no blood anywhere. Mexican Dream died of a drug overdose while we were fighting.”**

“Wait,” George spoke up, “‘cause now *I’m* confused.”

“Yeah...” Karl admitted.

“Are we seeing something that Tommy hallucinated or is this- did this *actually* happen?” Sam asked quietly, a slight shakiness to his tone.

“This was real.” Drista's voice came from overhead. “Tommy didn’t hallucinate Dream killing Mexican Dream. He’s completely lucid in this memory. He’s not imagining anything.”

Almost everyone blanched, horrified at the truth, but a singular laugh rang out through the room.

Tommy was smiling to himself, bottom lip trembling.

*"I knew I wasn't crazy."* He whispered, "I knew it."

Ranboo stared at him sadly, almost reaching out. *He wanted to so badly.* He wanted to hug Tommy and hold him and tell him it would be okay but he *couldn't*. And once again it was all Dream's fault.

**There was silence, and Tommy swallowed thickly, rubbing his fingers together as he felt the grime.**

***"But there's so much blood, Dream."* He whispered, eyes glassy.**

An immortal only ever let themselves cry many times in a lifetime, but for what felt like the millionth time in one sitting, Phil felt tears streaming down his cheeks.

Ranboo dissolved into sobs, wiping away at his tears hastily.

**"Where, Tommy?" The man replied, sounding close to tears. Tommy said nothing, only lifting his hands slightly, and Dream looked down at them.**

**"Here?" He asked, taking the bloody hands into his own, "Tommy there's no blood." He informed the boy, "Your hands are completely clean."**

**"Shut up Shut up Shut up *Shut up!*" Quackity all but cried, gripping furiously at his hair, completely at a loss for what else he could do.**

**Tommy choked on a sob, shaking his head. “Look,” he demanded, “*Look!*”**

Sam forced himself to look away.

**“I-I’m looking but I don’t see anything!” Dream cried out, panicked. He placed a hand on Tommy’s forehead, a hand covered in *blood* on his forehead.**

**The teen recoiled, letting out a panicked whine and backing away. Dream shuffled closer, bloody hand still outstretched. “There’s no blood, Tommy! I just- I need to check your temperature!”**

**Tommy sobbed, tears rolling down his cheeks as the older man felt his forehead. When Dream backed away he held out a closed fist.**

Tubbo felt physically ill, sinking into his seat as he just... stared. He didn’t know what else to do. There was nothing he *could* do.

**“How many fingers am I holding up?” He asked softly.**

**Tommy swallowed back a whine, sniffing. “None.”**

**Dream was very silent for a moment, not saying a word.**

**“...Tommy I’m holding up all five.”**

Karl bit back a sob, putting his head in his hands.

It was... It was *terrifying* seeing just how malleable Tommy was in Dream's grip. The man had literally brutally murdered a man in front of the kid and still somehow made *Tommy* feel like the crazy one.

The blond felt a wave of panic crash into him, and he shook his head furiously. "N-No! There's- I mean- *That can't be right!*"

"You're seeing things, Tommy." Dream said, tone soft and sad. "I don't know what's going on with you."

"I'm sorry" Tommy sobbed, breathing heavily, "I-I'm sorry I don't know! I don't know what's happening, Dream! "

"Hey," Dream began softly, reaching out, "Tommy breathe with me, you're losing it."

"I'm sorry," the blond repeated, even as his vision dimmed and he found himself swaying, "*I'm sorry...*"

Without another word, he collapsed into Dream's chest and the screen went dark.

Complete and utter silence fell over them all.

No one dared breathe, no one dared move a muscle.

And then Ranboo looked over to his left.

"You're smiling." He noted, voice hoarse and trembling.

Tommy looked up at him, a pointed smile on his face. The others watched, completely entranced and involved.

“I spent so long thinking I’d imagined that entire thing.” The blond whispered, “But now I know. *Now I know.*” Tears pricked at his eyes, “Dream *killed* him. The blood was *real.*”

And as they basked in the uncomfortable truth, they knew that the most sickening part was that Tommy had ever believed any of it to be fake in the first place. The most horrifying part of it all was knowing that Dream had Tommy wrapped *completely* around his finger and *completely* at his mercy.

With that final push, Tommy belonged to Dream.



# **i dont want to die alone.**

## Chapter Summary

funeral.

trigger warnings: blood, hallucinations/derealization (?), manipulation and severe abuse

Fundy had never had... the most normal relationships with people.

In his defence, however, it was *hard* being the only fox hybrid on the server. One moment he was getting piggybacks from his uncle Tommy, and the next he was tall enough to heft the kid over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes. He'd gone from terrible twos to terrible twenties without anyone really ever... changing. From his experience and his grandpa's knowledge, there weren't many other hybrids who aged the same as fox hybrids. That being said, it was extremely difficult maturing from newborn to the age of an adult in the same time it took your uncle to progress from pre-teen to teen.

So... yeah. Things had always been a bit tense between Fundy and Tommy. And it *probably* had something to do with the fact that the three year old got his growth spurt before the fourteen year old and just... the unnatural essence of it all.

Still, Fundy could remember the short period where he really *had* been a little kid, and his uncle Tommy had been the *best*. With Sally so sick and Wilbur constantly at her side, Tommy had stepped in, and many of Fundy's fondest memories were moments with the blond.

Sally hadn't wanted Fundy to see her like that, and Tommy had been more than willing to whisk him away so that she and Wilbur could have more time together.

She hadn't wanted Fundy to remember her sickly and pale, but to be honest, because of the time he spent away from her he ended up never really remembering her at all. There'd be times that he'd walk in a room and be overwhelmed, floored by the fact that *it smelled like mom*, but he could never narrow the source down, and was always left feeling a bit emptier.

He could remember her hugs and her smile, and the way she'd hold him in the air and rub their noses together, making them both giggle.

But more than anything, he remembered Tommy.

His uncle who was loud and angry and who brought him to the park and pushed him so hard on the swings that he ended up falling off. His uncle who bought his silence with ice cream. His uncle who tended to his scrapes and scratches with globs of polysporin and colourful band aids, claiming he was a pro at it.

His uncle who one day was younger than him. His uncle who was loud and angry and *annoying*. His uncle who was suddenly too busy for him, dressed head to toe in a uniform that reeked of blood and grime. His uncle who was a *child*.

His uncle Tommy.

Along the way, Fundy had stopped referring to Tommy as an uncle; mostly because it just felt wrong, but he'd also stopped seeing Tommy as one. It was hard to pinpoint where, but it was almost as if he'd woken up one day and their roles had reversed. It was sudden and jolting, but one day Fundy looked over and was hit with the realization that his 'uncle' was a *kid*.

And things had never really been the same.

After gaining their independence, the two had grown apart, and really, Fundy hadn't actually *talked* to Tommy in what felt like forever. There'd be small talk, sure, or moments of tense political debate; moments of him trying his hardest for just one second to please god *understand* his uncle and understand what he was thinking, but they were brief.

But watching everything on the screen, having a front row ticket to Tommy's innermost secrets and troubles, it was... well there were too many words to describe it and maybe not enough.

The things he saw were purely nauseating, and he didn't know how to cope with them. Classy, right? Fundy was watching *Tommy's* memories and worrying about *himself* and how *he* could cope.

Still, the only comfortable solution he'd managed to think of was making a mockery of it all. If he treated it like some sitcom or some shitty CW show he wouldn't have to deal with the fact that it was *real*. It was easiest to just make his little jabs and comments, amusing himself while annoying most of the others.

He didn't think he'd be able to handle taking it seriously.

When he looked over at Tommy and saw a little kid who'd been knocked down *so many fucking times* and still got up every time, no matter how tired and beaten down, it made him hurt. You'd think you'd be filled with admiration or respect, and sure, Fundy did feel those things, but more than anything he was just blatantly disgusted. No one should have to do that. No one should have to go through that.

Instead of looking at Tommy and praising how resilient he was, all Fundy could do was be appalled that he'd needed to be that resilient in the first place. Why did everyone always act like it was some huge statement and achievement that someone had persevered against the odds instead of focusing on the fact that the odds had been against them?

There was nothing wrong with commending someone's strength, but there was something *off* about using it as a means to dismiss the true atrocities they'd battled against.

Fundy had seen it happen a million times over. A soldier comes home tired and weary and *broken* and to avoid what had really happened, a general or collective will slap a medal on his chest and brand him a hero and then shove him in the corner to *inspire* others to follow that same path.

The title of 'Hero' had always felt dirty to Fundy.

He had never really thought of it until he'd heard Technoblade say it, but Tommy was often branded the hero without another thought. Fundy was concerned people didn't realize what

that really meant.

When you declared someone a hero it was a weight placed on their shoulders. It was a ball and chain. It was something to be *feared*. Someone deemed a hero was no longer a person; at least not before they were a savior. To be judged as a hero was something Fundy would *never* want for himself.

Because a hero's actions are constantly scrutinized. A hero is put on a pedestal, a hero is held to standards they could never actually live up to. Any action not heroic is villainous. Any action not for the greater good is selfish.

And Fundy could see that very thing happening to Tommy.

For the longest time he'd been jealous of Tommy. He hadn't understood. Because Fundy *needed* attention, and he didn't care if it was negative. Which is why he was so envious of the server's youngest. It was always Tommy this and Tommy that; it was *never* about Fundy.

But sitting there in that stuffy room with no room to stretch out his legs in the dark, he'd seen that there was *nothing* desirable about Tommy's life.

He didn't want to deal with that, though. It wasn't his problem. Knowing it was enough for him. It wasn't like someone was going to go "*well no, I want to hear Fundy's opinion on this*", so it didn't really do much to dwell on it. His opinion and his observations were basically useless.

So, yeah, he'd stick to making his snide remarks and sarcastic comments.

The screen flickered slightly, and Fundy sighed, sinking into his seat.

**Dream sighed softly, picking up the unconscious teen and laying him on a patch of grass under the trees, far from the blood. He brushed some of Tommy's hair away, staring**

**down at the crimson staining his face.**

Ranboo felt his skin crawl at the sight, shuddering.

**He had work to do.**

**It was easy enough digging a hole for the body. He was strong and tall, and it didn't take much out of him. When he walked back over to Mexican Dream he paused, debating whether it'd be easier to drag or carry him.**

Many of them stared intently, both intrigued and perplexed as to why Dream would bother doing the dirty work. It seemed like something he would have loved to make Tommy do.

**Eventually, he settled on dragging the corpse. It'd be easier to wash the blood from the ground than from his sweater.**

**Within minutes he was gently patting down the dirt on the grave, a small sheen of sweat covering the face behind the mask.**

It was genuinely nauseating to watch, almost none of them ever having seen a body be disposed of.

Karl, Sapnap, and George were at a loss for words, horrified as they watched the body of their missing friend be covered up.

**Tommy still had yet to wake, which gave him more time. The blood washed from the grass like magic, and before he knew it, the scene was almost clean.**

Quackity felt sick at the realization of what Dream was doing, having to bite his tongue to avoid screaming.

Phil paled drastically.

Puffy was absolutely repulsed by the sight, rearing away from the screen.

Tubbo cringed, frowning deeply.

**And just like that, once he'd changed his clothes and given the mask a good wipe down, it was like there'd never been any blood to begin with. And with Mexican Dream's body six feet under, Tommy would have no way of seeing the wound.**

**It was perfect.**

*So that's how he did it...* Tommy thought, eyes wide.

**When Tommy came back to consciousness, it was with a pounding in his skull and a dull ache throughout his entire body. Before he'd even opened his eyes, he could hear the chirping of crickets and the sound of the waves lapping at the shore. He could feel the grass beneath him.**

**With an unsteady groan, he opened his eyes, being met with the sight of trees towering above him. He sat up, looking around with a confused expression.**

**"Tommy!" Dream called, racing over. He crouched at the blond's side, checking him over, "Thank god you're awake! I was getting worried!"**

Fundy found himself taken aback by the pure animosity present in his anger when he saw Dream rushing over. He had to avert his eyes to the Tommy in the room, reassuring himself that it was all in the past.

**Tommy said nothing, looking around quietly. “...What happened?”**

**Dream went quiet, but he turned his head in the direction of the dirt mound behind them. The teen went very still, eyes widening and glossing over, before collapsing into sobs. He fell directly into the older man’s chest, holding on tight as Dream wrapped his arms around the boy.**

**“I’m so sorry, Tommy.” Dream whispered, rubbing circles into Tommy’s back, “I know he meant a lot to you.”**

Sapnap bared his teeth at the screen, a fire lighting beneath his skin.

**Tommy couldn’t reply, gasping for air between sobs.**

Niki frowned.

**And they stayed like that until Tommy was able to pull away, eyes red-rimmed and puffy, sniffing quietly. He looked down at his hands, and then to where the body had been.**

**“Guess I really was imagining things,” he muttered, “I’m sorry, Dream.”**

“Tommy...” Quackity began, eyes creased sadly.

Tommy refused to reply, angrily staring ahead.

**“Oh,” Dream tilted his head, sounding sad, “Tommy no, you don’t have to apologize. I was just worried about you, okay? I could never be mad at you for something like that.”**

Tecno raised a brow, unimpressed by the man's antics. He denied whatever was brewing in his stomach.

**Tommy nodded, closing his eyes as a few stray tears slipped down his cheeks. And just for a moment, the wind gentle and the bird chirping, he could pretend he was standing in the forest just outside of L'Manberg.**

Phil's heart broke, and he felt as though he could physically feel the pain.

**When he opened his eyes, however, he was met with the emotionless slate of Dream's mask. Perhaps earlier in his exile that would have disappointed or enraged him, but by then it did nothing. He was used to it.**

**"We need to have a funeral." He rasped out, clearing his throat.**

**"Of course," Dream hummed, placing a tentative hand on his back and guiding him over to the burial, "whatever you need, Tommy."**

"It was a shitty funeral." Tommy muttered angrily, "We did a shit job."

"I'm sure Mexican Dream appreciated it a lot, Tommy." Puffy smiled sympathetically.

Tommy was pretty sure MD would've actually fucking hated his funeral for more than one reason.

**The screen shifted to the sun rising over the horizon, shining down on the ocean. Tommy stood morosely beside the mound of dirt, a lump in his throat as the wind blew through his hair.**

**Dream was standing idly by, watching quietly.**



**Tommy took a deep breath, clenching and unclenching his fists.**

**“Mexican Dream was... my friend.” He began hoarsely, “I know I didn’t know him for very long but he was always there for me and he made me feel... I dunno... better I guess.” he sniffled, wiping messily at his nose with his forearm, “I just... I wish I could have known him for longer.”**

**“I’m sorry, Tommy.” Sam offered his condolences.**

**“Thanks... I guess.”**

**Blue scurried around in his messy bed of hair, chittering quietly.**

**“I hope he’s okay, wherever he is,” Tommy smiled sadly, “m-maybe with Wilbur or something.” He laughed quietly.**

**Niki bit the inside of her cheek as Phil frowned.**

*Well, I suppose he’s not doing all that bad actually...and he is with Wilbur. So that was a pretty good guess.* Tommy tilted his head, staring at the screen.

**“That’s a nice thought, Tommy.” Dream affirmed, listening closely and paying apt attention. “I’m sure Mexican Dream would really appreciate what you’re doing for him right now.”**

**“I’m sure Mexican Dream would really appreciate being fucking alive.” Fundy muttered.**

**Tommy tried to keep smiling, staring down at the uneven dirt with glassy eyes. His bottom lip trembled, snot dripping from his nose.**

**Without much warning he dissolved into sobs, falling to his knees beside the grave. Dream didn't hesitate to close in, kneeling at the boy's side and holding him close. He wrapped his arms around Tommy.**

For some reason, it never got easier watching Tommy cry, but it also didn't feel as bad as it could've.

Perhaps it was because the very real present-time Tommy in the room was so adamant about *not* crying that it didn't feel as real.

Tommy's bitterness and unwillingness to just *react* made it feel almost... fake.

**"It's not fair, Dream," the blond managed, "he died *alone!* H-his friends should be here! His family should be here!"**

Tubbo, Ranboo, and Phil all frowned.

**"You were here," Dream pointed out quietly, "he had you. And if anything ever happens, you'll have me."**

Those were the exact opposite of comforting reassurances. Jack glared at the screen.

**Tommy cried quietly for a couple more moments, hiccupping and warbling incoherent strings of sad rambles. "But what about Tubbo?" He whispered solemnly, "What about all my friends?"**

The boy in question pursed his lips.

**Dream almost immediately stiffened at the words, and Tommy's eyes went wide, already realizing the mistake he'd made. He opened his mouth to correct himself, to take it all back, but by the time it had registered in his mind, he'd already been pushed back, falling roughly to the ground.**

Almost everyone in the room collectively tensed. It was no longer fear or shock, it was just a desperate plea for them to not have to watch it again.

**"I-I'm sorry Dream I don't know why I said that I don't-"**

Jack didn't like how small Tommy got during those moments. Tommy was supposed to be... well... Big. He was loud and he took up space with his aura alone.

**"Do I really matter that little to you?" Dream hissed, raising to his full height as he began to circle the boy. The sun was further up in the sky by then, but large dark grey clouds had begun to show in the sky. He paced around slowly, like a predator rounding on its prey.**

**"No!" Tommy all but cried, shaking his head frantically. "No, I-"**

**He was interrupted by the sound of a sword unsheathing behind him, and he whirled around, eyes wide with terror. He backed away as best he could when on the ground, breathing heavily.**

Ranboo nearly choked, blinking in shock.

Tommy bowed his head in shame, cheeks growing red as he clamped down hard on his tongue. Slowly reciting things he could see and feel.

If he tried hard enough maybe he could make them think that exile had made him stronger instead of weaker. If he tried hard enough to just not fucking react maybe they wouldn't see him as an easy target.

**Dream was quiet, still walking circles around the boy. He dragged the sword along the ground, trailing it behind him. Tommy managed to catch a glimpse of his own terrified eyes staring back at him in the blade's reflection.**

The people in the room were completely silent, staring in horror.

**“After everything I’ve done,” Dream paused in his footsteps, shaking his head and laughing quietly to himself, “I’m *still*,” he plunged the blade down, narrowly missing Tommy’s leg but still making a rather sizeable gash in the blond’s upper thigh, “second best to Tubbo!?”**

Tubbo flinched badly at the cry of his name and the violent action. His eyes widened, his mouth going dry.

Phil clenched his fists tightly, screwing his eyes shut tight and trying to steady his breathing. His rage would be useless now.

**Tommy let out a pained shriek, hands instantly moving to cover the wound. Blood bubbled up and out from beneath his fingers. As Dream uplifted the sword from its place in the ground, he nicked the side of the blond’s hand, causing Tommy to whine once more.**

Karl’s head was already pounding from how much he’d been crying, but still, he felt tears prick at his eyes.

**“Please!” Tommy sobbed, “Please Dream, I didn’t mean it!”**

Sam bit back his anger, steadying himself.

**“Tubbo *exiled* you!” Dream cried, “Tubbo did *this* to you! He’s responsible for *all of this!*” He gestured around, motioning at the area before them, “And I... *I* do so much for you. I visit you when no one else will, I *take care* of you when you’re too weak to do it on your own, and *I do everything for you!*”**

Tubbo cringed, looking away from the screen. His name was always thrown around like that.

*Because you’re Tommy’s biggest weakness*, a voice chimed in the back of his head. He chose to ignore it.

**There was a brief pause, Tommy staring up at the man like a deer in headlights, blood pooling in the grass and tears streaming down his face.**

**“But you don’t care...” Dream whispered. His voice was laced with honey, soft and gentle and *hurt*. “You just want to use me for my kindness.”**

“Shut up,” Quackity muttered, eyes wide with rage as he grit his teeth, “*Shut up!*”

He couldn’t do it anymore; He couldn’t watch it anymore, it hurt too much.

**“I do care!” Tommy cried out, panicked, “I do! I do! I promise you I do, Dream!”**

**Above them, the clouds grew darker and denser, and Blue was completely silent. Dream said nothing, staring down at the boy. He seemed so much larger in that moment, as if he were taller than the mountains. Tommy felt like an anthill.**

**“No,” the masked man said finally, “you don’t.”**

**Tommy’s eyes widened, mouth agape. His hands had relaxed, letting the wound bleed freely. Small droplets began to fall from the sky, scarcely and slowly.**

**“And maybe that’s my fault.” Dream mused, a hint of a smile in his tone, “Maybe I’m just not good enough for you, Tommy.”**

Puffy sneered at the screen.

**The blond reached out, fingers dripping with blood, a pained expression on his face, but Dream turned his back, sheathing his sword.**

**“I guess that’s my fault.” He paused, turning back one last time. “I’m sorry.” He told the boy quietly. Saying nothing more before stalking off into the distance.**

Ranboo’s eyes widened.

That was it? He was going to leave Tommy like that?

**Tommy was left sitting next to the grave, blood dripping down his thigh and staining his pants, watching Dream go.**

**The rain began to fall harder, and for a moment he merely sat there, as if in shock. It wasn’t until Blue let out a tiny hiss at the raindrops, crawling out from his hair and over to the safety of the trees, that he snapped out of his haze.**

**With a wince and a groan, he pulled himself into a standing position, letting out a tiny gasp of a sob. He stared off in the direction that Dream had gone, eyebrows creased and frowning deeply, before he made a direct beeline in the opposite direction.**

*Yes! They cheered, Leave! Leave!*

**As fast as he could go, limping terribly and clutching onto his wounded leg, he made a desperate attempt to flee. He grit his teeth, sobbing as he ran. Thunder boomed overhead, lightning striking in far-off places. The rain had become much denser, pelting him roughly and soaking him to the bone, but he continued on.**

**When he reached a field, the very one he'd found Mushroom Henry in, his leg gave out. He let out a surprised yelp, tumbling down into the mud and barely managing to brace the fall with his hands. The dirt and grime soaked into the cut on his palm, and he merely stared down at the mixture of blood and water, and mud all coming together at his knees.**

Jack felt sick, looking away.

George's grip on the armrests tightened as he tensed.

**He stared, face devoid of emotion, sopping wet and bleeding, bruised and battered. The rain continued to fall, thunder booming even louder.**

**All at once, Tommy began to cry once more. He let out a tiny whine, barely managing to breathe before it all came bursting out. His chest heaved at the gravity of the sobs as he knelt there on his hands and knees, struggling to breathe through his tears.**

It wasn't the first time they'd watched him break down, but for some reason, it felt the worst.

It was almost as if he was so upset because he didn't have it in him to be upset anymore.

They stared, uncomfortable.

**He sobbed so violently that it came out in wails and screams more than anything, and when that became too much for his already weakened body, he began to retch onto the ground. Barely anything but water came up, and he spent a painful amount of time sobbing and dry heaving.**

Tears dripped down Phil's face as he silently cried, apologizing over and over in his mind.

But it was never enough.

**And then, his body gave out, and he collapsed onto his side, managing to roll onto his back. He stared up at the sky, scrunching up his face and trying to shield himself from the endless barrage of rain.**

**He wasn't sure if he sat there for minutes or months, but he was only pulled from his daze when he saw something moving out of the corner of his eye.**

They watched with bated breath.

**Silently, he begged for it to be a wolf, or perhaps a pack of wolves, ready to tear him apart and put an end to his misery, much like he'd watched happen that one day in the tower with Wilbur.**

**Instead? A familiar head of brown tousled hair and vibrant green eyes stood over him, staring down.**

Tubbo went rigid, and he could see Tommy cringing to his left.

"Hallucination." The blond muttered, "Just so we're clear. Even I realized this one was fake when I woke up the next day."

**Tommy let out a delirious laugh, wincing at the pain in his thigh. He'd lost an awful amount of blood.**

The sight made Ranboo feel sick.



**“Hello, Tubbo.” He managed, voice hoarse and scratchy. The words were barely comprehensible, his throat completely ruined after the screaming and retching.**

Tubbo wanted to just fucking die at the sound of his best friend’s voice like that. His throat was so raw and wounded.

**The older boy offered no response, still just staring, voice devoid of emotion.**

**“I’m sorry you have to see me like this,” Tommy muttered, “I don’t... you can leave, if you want.”**

*Never,* Tubbo thought fiercely.

**Tubbo’s suit and hair were completely dry, despite the rain. Tommy could feel his hair sticking to his forehead, fully soaked. Still, the goat-hybrid said nothing.**

He looked so small, drenched in the rain like that.

**“But if you- if you wouldn’t mind,” Tommy began, eyes welling with tears, though it wasn’t noticeable in the relentless downpour, “I’d quite like you to stay.”**

Tubbo held back tears, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath.

**He was quiet for a moment, smiling sadly.**

***“I don’t want to die alone.”* He whispered, tears rolling down his cheeks and mixing in with the rain.**

Tommy glowered at the ground, digging into his skin angrily.

Fucking Humiliating.

Almost everyone else was heartbroken.

**Tubbo didn't reply, but he sat down beside Tommy, still staring.**

**"I'm sorry, did you know that?" The blond questioned, eyes half-lidded and teeth chattering. "I know I deserve this, I know I deserve *worse*. You don't have to worry about- about if I learned anything. I did."**

"Tommy *no*," Tubbo whispered, eyes red-rimmed, "I..."

He didn't even know what to say. He couldn't think of anything to say. How could he even respond to that?

**Still, he was met with silence.**

**"I miss Phil." He smiled sadly, "I just... *I want my dad*." He whispered, crying quietly to himself.**

"Oh Tommy..." Phil muttered, tears streaming down his face. He felt like his heart had been fucking ripped out.

**"And I- I miss Techno too. I know I shouldn't but I *do* . He's my brother, y'know? And I still *hate him* for what he did to you but I just- I just can't let go. I'm sorry I can't be stronger for you, Tubbo."**

Techno's ear twitched slightly, and he narrowed his eyes at the screen.

Tommy's stare could have burnt holes into the ground, the tips of his ears bright red.

How fucking embarrassing was that? Not even that long after Techno had basically *disowned* *him*.

**Tubbo was silent as ever.**

**"It's fine, though," Tommy grinned, "because I know you're doing better without me now, yeah? That's fine, don't worry. I was holding you back, you never really- really *cared*, y'know? D-Dream helped me see that." The smile slipped from his face, "Just promise me you'll be- you'll be happy, okay? You don't have to visit me ever again, okay? Just stop putting other people above yourself, man." His whole body was shivering, drenched head to toe as the wind blew angrily.**

Tubbo bowed his head, tears dripping onto his lap. He could barely breathe, he could *feel* the pain in his chest, gasping for air. There was nothing physically wrong with him but it hurt so bad.

Ranboo looked over in concern.

Tommy couldn't help but smile slightly, though it was gone as soon as it had appeared. He was glad the real Tubbo had ended up hearing those words in the end.

"You know I care," Tubbo whispered, "*please* tell me you know I care about you."

Tommy was quiet for a moment before he looked up, noticing how many pairs of eyes were on him and waiting for his answer.

"Course I do." He snorted, rolling his eyes.

Not a single person in that room believed him.

**“I just want you to be okay, Tubbo.” He sighed, closing his eyes and letting his head sink into the dirt.**

Tubbo bit back a sob, burying his face in his hands.

**When he opened them, Tubbo was gone, and instead, there was a masked smiley face staring down at him.**

Instantly, everyone tensed.

**Tommy blinked, taken aback slightly, before bursting into another round of ashamed tears.**

**“Come on, Tommy.” Dream sighed, bending down and picking the teen up. He clutched Tommy close to his chest, cradling him securely.**

Phil glared at the screen, wings hiking up. He knew it was over, he knew it was the past, but he *needed* to get that man’s hands off his son.

**The blond latched onto him, grabbing fistfuls of the green hoodie and gripping it for dear life as he pressed his head into Dream’s collar, sobbing quietly.**

Tommy grit his teeth, itching at his neck.

He was so fucking *weak*. And they all got front-row tickets to it. All these people *who wanted to hurt him* were seeing his weakness so openly.

***“I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry.”*** He muttered over and over, crying earnestly.

Niki looked away.

**Dream said nothing, only letting out another sigh and beginning the trek back to Logstedshire.**

**The screen went dark.**

A silence hung over them all, weighing them down.

Tommy glared at the ground as he felt the silent judgment rolling off them all in waves.

And none of them knew what to say.

Save for one individual.

“Okay, you know what? No. I’m not doing this anymore. I’m done.”

# please never leave me

## Chapter Summary

exile comes to a close.

TRIGGER WARNINGS: physical and verbal abuse, manipulation, animal death, blood and injury, slight gore, self-harm, implied/referenced suicide and panic attacks

Quackity stood abruptly, drawing all attention to himself. His eyes were red-rimmed and puffy, hair disheveled.

Karl looked up, eyes wide. “Quackity what-”

“We can’t keep doing this,” the duck hybrid announced, “we- we *can’t*.” He turned slightly to his left, lips pursed.

“Tommy, man, I’ve been watching you,” He began, frowning deeply, “like- like *you*, right here not on the screen. And I know that sounds fucking weird but listen to me,” he took a brief pause, “whatever you’re doing it... it can’t be right.”

The blond in question furrowed his brow, not quite sure how to respond. He tried to think of what that meant but he didn’t really... get it.

“Like, you’re not *reacting*, Tommy.” Quackity stressed, eyes pleading, “To any of this!” He gestured towards the screen.

Tommy bristled, swallowing thickly. He laughed nervously, trying to play it off. “I don’t know what you’re talking about, Big Q.” He offered weakly.

“*Tommy*, ” Quackity persisted, “I’m worried about you man. You- You should be crying! Or screaming or *something!* ” He frowned, “I can see you holding back. I can see you trying not to react.”

The teen frowned, curling in on himself slightly.

“The shit we’re watching? It’s next-level terrible, seriously.” The duck hybrid lowered his voice, speaking softer, “I just... I can’t sit here and watch you go on like that for however long the rest of this is... It’s *painful* to watch.”

Some of the others in the room looked to be just then realizing how quiet Tommy had been. It was... concerning.

The things they were seeing weren’t something to be taken lightly, and many of them couldn’t stomach it. For Tommy to be silent throughout almost all of it was an unsettling thought.

Tommy opened his mouth to reply, looking slightly disgruntled, but was interrupted.

“I agree with him, Tommy.” Puffy piped up, smiling gently. “It’s not... good for you.”

The blond scoffed, ready to retaliate, but was interrupted once more.

“Yeah,” Karl frowned, “are you like, okay?”

Tommy bristled, scowling. “I-”

“While I don’t think you should be here in *general*, ” Puffy muttered bitterly, stopping Tommy from speaking once again, “I *do* think you should-”

*"I'm fine!"* Tommy cried out, glaring angrily at all of them, taking a moment to calm himself, *"I'm. Fine."*

There was an uncomfortable silence in the room, many people squirming around as both Tommy and Quackity stared each other down. It was only broken by the latter letting out a loud sigh and a groan, looking tired.

"We're just trying to help you!" He threw his arms up, trying to reason.

"Yeah well I don't *need* your help," Tommy hissed, baring his teeth angrily, "maybe back then I did, yeah, but you missed your fuckin chance man. So piss off." He bit out harshly, turning back around in his seat to face forward, arms crossed and teeth grit. His leg continued to bounce up and down.

Quackity bit the inside of his cheek, scowling at the teen. Why didn't Tommy see? Why was he *pushing them away*?

"...But do you *want* our help?" Tubbo chimed in, tone light but pensive.

"No." Tommy replied, much too hastily and disingenuous. The word felt like ash on his tongue. "Fuck off."

"Alright then." Tubbo shrugged nonchalantly. Ranboo swiveled, eyes wide as if he was questioning his husband's sanity. The ram hybrid only grinned, leaning over to whisper in the taller's ear.

*"You can't force him into things. He doesn't like it."* He whispered.

Ranboo paused for a moment, blinking a couple of times before whispering back, *"Does... Does anyone like being forced into things?"*



*“Well no... but he’s like a stray cat, yeah?” Tubbo replied, “If you get too close or too comfortable too fast he’ll scratch the shit out of you. Gotta make him come to you n shit.”*

“Can you two shut the fuck up?” Tommy interrupted, leaning over with an unimpressed look on his face.

“This does not concern you, big man.” Tubbo tried to shrug him off. Ranboo looked sheepish.

“You are quite literally discussing me.” The blond shot back, eyes narrowed. “And I am *not* a fuckin cat... if anything I’m a dog. A big, cool, strong dog.” He puffed his chest out, smirking slightly before his eyes lit up with excitement, “or a *dragon!*”

“You’re a raccoon.” Techno butted in, “End of argument.”

Tommy instantly deflated, glaring over at his older brother. Phil tried to stifle a smile.

Quackity had gone very quiet, staring bitterly at the back of Tommy’s head, arms crossed and muttering quietly to himself. The latter was very aware, actively trying to ignore it.

Karl and Sapnap shared a somewhat confused and perplexed look.

Before any more arguments or heated debates could start up, the screen flickered to life, and all conversations were brought to a close.

**It was a cold day on the beach. The sun was just barely peeking over the horizon, reflecting on the ocean’s surface. Most of the insects and other critters had burrowed far away, either in preparation for hibernation or just to avoid the cold for the night. The wind was harsh, as it always was on the waterline, the trees rustling in its pull.**

Niki had always thought the beach was pretty, but she wasn't sure how much anyone else would agree with her, so she didn't comment on it.

**Tommy slept in his tent, thin fabric that could barely be deemed a blanket pulled up to his chin as his teeth chattered. His eyes were scrunched up tight, blond hair was matted with blood and tangled beyond saving.**

Sam cringed at the sight. Dream had been very detailed with many things, but he'd always sort of left Tommy's living conditions to the imagination.

Trust him, Sam had *not* been imagining Tommy sleeping basically outside in the cold every night.

**He pried his eyes open. They were crusted with sleep, sore, and red. He sniffled quietly, rubbing at his dripping nose; his cheeks a rosy red. His eyes were dull, a greyish-blue, much unlike the beautiful vibrant cerulean they'd once been.**

Puffy's heart squeezed.

**Rising into a sitting position, he stretched out his arms, yawning quietly to himself. He wrapped his hands around his arms, rubbing them up and down to generate even the smallest bit of heat as he shivered. His clothes were burnt and torn in several places, splattered with blood and mud. The compass was fastened tightly around his neck.**

Phil held his tongue. There was nothing he could say or do, and he doubted there was anything Tommy *wanted* him to say or do that could make things better.

He wasn't quite sure what they were going to do once they escaped the wretched room, but he knew that in the moment the best thing he could do for his son was respect his boundaries.

Unfortunately for him, that meant staying quiet and staying away.

He looked... sad. The spark in his eye had gone out, leaving nothing but sad flushed embers. His usual lackluster, which had still managed to make appearances throughout exile, seemed to be all but gone.

When he turned his head, however, he smiled softly.

“Up early, are we?” He grinned, standing from his cot and groaning at the strain pulling at all his joints.

Blue was resting proudly on a web. They seemed to be showing up more and more, which only proved to confuse Tommy in increasing increments. The delicate silks were draped across the opening mouth of the tent. Morning dew clung to the strands, glistening in the early sun.

“Oh...” Fundy blanked, “That is kind of disgusting.”

“It is not!” Tommy cried back, affronted.

“Who on earth is making these for you?” He muttered, placing a finger on one of the lines, delicately so as not to break it, “and why do you like them so much?”

“What the hell are you talking about?” Sapnap demanded, “She’s a spider dude, *she* made it.”

“Jumping spiders don’t spin webs *Sapnap*.” Tommy retorted, scoffing and rolling his eyes as if it was the most obvious thing in the world. There was, however, an undertone of panic laced in his voice, though they didn’t know why.

It was always weird to see the soft intimate moments where Tommy was alone. He was so *gentle* and *kind*, yet when they looked over all they got was an angry sneer and an insult or

two.

“You must know a lot about spiders then, Tommy.” Puffy smiled softly at him. He instantly scowled, looking away as he blushed.

“Dude that is *so* cool I *love* bugs!” Karl inserted himself into the conversation excitedly, “Like... not spiders but if you ever wanna talk beetles, I am *so* your guy.” He declared proudly.

Tommy looked over, staring at him quietly for a moment before rolling his eyes and muttering something unintelligible under his breath.

He didn’t say no, however, and Karl considered that a win.

**Blue was, of course, completely quiet, but she did spin in a circle.**

**Tommy chuckled lightly, wincing slightly at a pain in his ribs before ducking underneath the web, careful not to touch it. He stuck a hand out, letting Blue crawl over his fingers and up onto his shoulder.**

**“I’d say you have a friend, yeah?” He glanced back at the web, “Judging by the size and intricacy it’s gotta be a girl... an orb weaver I’d reckon.”**

“So you *definitely* know your spiders then?” Puffy smirked. Apparently, that was much more up Tommy’s alley as he grinned wide, stretching his arms out and resting them behind his head.

“Yup!” He affirmed, “that’s me! Smartinnit!”

Tubbo rolled his eyes. “Please do *not* get him started.”

Ranboo smiled.

**The spider on his shoulder chittered quietly, going about her ways, and he let out a dramatic sigh.**

**“You seem to like her webs quite a bit but I’ve yet to see her.” He raised a brow.**

**Blue only tapped her little legs along his bandanna, staring up at him.**

**“Scared to bring her home to dad, is that what it is?” He grinned, “I’ll admit I *am* pretty intimidating.”**

**“Aw, you’re her dad!” Puffy gushed, “That’s so cute!”**

**“I’m a grandpa.” Phil commented quietly, wiping away a fake tear “I’ve been waiting for this day.”**

**Fundy’s tail spiked up immediately as his eyes went wide.**

***“Fuck you!”***

**She turned her back to him and he laughed quietly.**

**He stood quietly afterward, eyeing the skyline with a narrowed but weary glare. The morning sun was a deep golden light, splayed out onto his face. The wind ruffled his hair and clothes, and he sighed quietly. He looked down, gritting his teeth and cursing silently to himself.**

**It wasn't until he felt something poking at the palm of his hand that he looked down.**

**Blue sat happily on his hand. He hadn't even felt her crawl back down from his shoulder. Before her was a dead fly, resting on his palm. She seemed to be offering it to him.**

**Tommy laughed nervously.**

"You know you tried to make me eat your mud sandwich on several separate occasions." Phil hummed, smiling sadly.

Tommy rolled his eyes, though the action and enthusiasm seemed forced, "*Totally* different scenario here."

**"Oh no," he shook his head, "I couldn't! It's a gift from your friend no doubt." he insisted, "I'm going to call her Ella, by the way, and Ella *clearly* wanted you to eat this." he nodded at the fly, "don't think I can't see that silk lining! She caught it for *you!*"**

**Blue snatched the fly back, as if cross with him before leaping from his hand, using her silk to catch her as she stalked back off inside the tent. Tommy let out an amused huff.**

Tommy felt sick to his stomach watching what should have been a fond memory, swallowing back bile.

Everyone else laughed, happy with the upbeat atmosphere.

**And then, as quick as it had come, the slight joy that he'd found was replaced with a deep and profound sadness. He sighed, shoulders dropping.**

**He was so *lonely*.**

**Even with Blue at his side, it just wasn't enough. He needed another person there, his best friend.**

**He needed Dream.**

**"Where is he...?" Tommy whispered quietly, looking both out at the ocean and in the direction of the portal. "He said he'd come visit today."**

"Don't tell me you *want* him to come..." Jack muttered.

Tommy whirled around, glaring. *"Don't tell me you want him to come!"* He mocked, flipping the latter off.

Jack sighed. He should have known better than to assume that having one adult conversation with Tommyinnit would ever insinuate future ones.

Still, he was slightly... unnerved, let's say, by Tommy's eagerness to see Dream.

**He spent a few more moments staring forlornly before giving in with a dejected sigh, making his way over to Logstedshire. He walked down the path quietly, hunched in on himself and limping from the injury on his thigh.**

Tubbo couldn't help but wince at the memory, frowning.

**He stepped into the logged area, pursing his lips and moving over toward the corner. Mushroom Henry swiveled on her hooves, looking up at him excitedly. He kneeled before her, laughing quietly as she licked his face and he ran his hands through her fur.**

**"Hello, gorgeous." He hummed. "Feeling good today, yeah?"**

Techno didn't really care about others' quirks and qualities, but even he had to say that he admired Tommy's gentle and somehow experienced approach when it came to wildlife.

The kid was a natural.

**She'd been one of the only things keeping him sane, if he was being honest. He always felt comforted by her presence, even though he hadn't really liked her in the beginning. She'd grown on him over the weeks.**

**It was him, Blue, Mushroom Henry, and Dream against the world.**

**Tommy frowned, feeling a tightness in his chest, tears pricking at his eyes. The sudden melancholy was strong and bullheaded, and he found he couldn't evade it.**

**"Fuck everyone else." He cursed bitterly, seemingly out of nowhere, "We don't need them. *I* don't need them."**

"Well, that was sudden." Quackity commented.

**Mushroom Henry rumbled lowly, headbutting him gently. He looked down at her, a trace of fondness in his eyes.**

**"I've got you and Blue," he told her, "and some things stashed away just in case, and of course, I've got Dream." he grinned, "So- so fuck everyone else! I'm happier here. I'm *better* here, actually!"**

"Tommy..."

"Zip it."



**He smiled shakily, standing on wobbly knees. Mushroom Henry watched him quietly.**

**“There’s no point in caring, don’t you see!?” He laughed, looking up at the sky,  
“Wilbur’s gone, Tubbo’s gone, Phil and Techno are gone... even Ghostbur’s gone!”**

“Where did Ghostbur go?” Niki frowned.

“Dream sent him off to die in the snow 'cause he was causing problems in exile, y’know? Things like being my friend and handing out party invitations.” Tommy tried for a smile but it came off as more of a grimace, “The usual.”

“Don’t joke about that shit.” Quackity hissed quietly.

Tommy glared at him as George gave him a weird look.

**He threw his hands up in the air, ignoring the barely healed cuts breaking open once more and the pain shooting through his chest, before letting himself fall to the ground on his back as he stared up at the clouds.**

**For a moment he just watched with a smile, but it quickly slipped from his face, and he stared up with dull half-lidded eyes.**

**“There’s no point in caring anymore.” He muttered quietly, “I’m alone and I deserve it.”**

Ranboo’s heart nearly broke in two, and he whined quietly.

**Tommy reached out for the sky with an outstretched hand for just a moment before letting it fall to the ground with a thump.**

**“I’m okay with this.”**

**The screen went dark.**

“Ah the final stage,” Fundy sighed, “acceptance.”

Phil groaned, rubbing at his temple. “Fundy, what the fuck is wrong with you?”

“What!?” The fox hybrid laughed, “Tommy thinks my comments are funny!”

The majority of the group looked to the blond for confirmation, and he sank slightly lower in his seat.

“I mean, they *are* a bit insensitive, but that’s to be expected of someone like you, Fundy. I quite like them actually.” He gave a thumbs up.

“Tommy!” Phil chided, “Don’t encourage him!”

The two only laughed.

To be quite honest, Tommy was a huge fan of anything that took away from the severity of the scenes. Normally he’d be all over not letting people water down what he’d been through, but in a moment where they were forced to *watch* what he’d been through, Fundy’s snide remarks were like a godsend, even if their effect only lasted a few moments.

**Tommy let his head fall back, knocking it slightly against the wall. He had his knees drawn to his chest, back pushed up against the stone. Scattered all around him were photographs on the floor.**

**He was in a small cobblestone room. It was decorated with a few large chests and torches, a ladder leading up and out of it.**

**His secret room.**

Tommy sucked in a sharp breath. No good memories resided *there* of all places.

**Tears were building in his eyes, and he was gripping tightly at his hair, pulling it roughly through grit teeth.**

**“I’m sorry,” he whispered, crying quietly, “I know I’m wrong for this...” he looked down at the photos, “I’m *so* sorry.” His voice was hoarse, as though he’d been crying for hours. There were large bloody scratches on his arms, his nails coated in crimson.**

The mood instantly shifted, and everyone was on edge just like that.

Phil rubbed a hand over his face, gritting his teeth as he tried to hold back.

Every new memory felt like the most embarrassing moment of Tommy’s life.

**Tommy leaned over, grabbing one of the pictures. It was of him and Tubbo, smiling happily on the beach. Tommy’s eyes were a bright blue, braces glinting in the sun, and a wide, genuine smile on his face.**

Tubbo smiled sadly, looking over at his friend to the left of him. Where had he gone?

**He stifled a sob.**

**“I love Dream,” he murmured, teardrops falling onto the glossy cover of the photo, “he’s my best friend... my only friend,” he took a deep breath, trying to steady his breathing, “but I don’t- he wanted to burn these... I don’t want to lose my memories.”**

The weight of hearing Tommy call Dream his best friend hit them all at once, and they all reared back.

Tubbo clenched his fists at his side, not saying a word.

**Tommy let out a low whine, keeling over and taking a deep breath. He gathered all the photos hastily in his hands, shoving them back into the chest and closing it shut tight. He fell back to the ground, gasping for air as he shook his head over and over.**

**“I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry...”**

Tommy had been holding onto the hope that Drista just didn’t know what she’d been doing, but seeing the things she was choosing to put on display, it couldn’t have been more obvious.

She fucking hated him.

**He paused, clenching his eyes shut tight as if that would make it all go away, but when he opened them it just seemed all the more real.**

**Slowly, he opened the other chest, rifling through an assortment of his most valuable items that just didn’t quite make the cut for the ender chest. He ran his hands along them, frowning slightly. He’d worked so hard for every single one of them. That or they’d been gifts.**

**He sighed, slouching and bowing his head. “I don’t think I have it in me to try anymore...” he began, “and I don’t think I have much time left.”**

Ranboo looked over, concerned. “What does that...”

“You tell me, boob boy.” Tommy hissed, the tips of his ears bright red.

**He looked up at the exit of the room, eyes sad and lifeless, before looking back in front of him.**

**“I hope they don’t think too lowly of me when they come for my things.” He whispered, closing the chest tight firmly and standing on unsteady legs.**

“Tommy...” Puffy whispered, eyes glassy.

Niki shifted uncomfortably.

**With that he stood, turning to leave, before his eyes widened just slightly.**

**“Oh,” he began, “I should make sure I have armour on me. For Dream and I’s little bonding thing. Otherwise, he might be upset.”**

Tommy cringed at the words, already preparing himself for that stupid enderman stare.

“Bonding thing?” Ranboo repeated.

“Look I *really* don’t want to talk about this, Ranboob,” Tommy laughed awkwardly, “so if you could just *not* that’d be fantastic, thanks.”

He didn’t understand why Ranboo looked so sad at that, but at least he fucking listened and decided to be quiet.

**Without so much as an ounce of hesitation or fuss, he grabbed a large stack of iron ingots from the chest, moving over to the crafting table and beginning to make a set of iron armour.**

“...You’re making armour.” Quackity muttered quietly, and Tommy cringed, “you’re *making* armour just for Dream to blow up?”

“Alright look Big Q I know it was fucking stupid so you don’t have to rub it in, okay?” The blond hissed.

Quackity blinked, as if taken aback.

“What? Tommy no,” he shook his head, “I’m mad *for* you. You aren’t- you aren’t stupid for any of this... do you really think that?”

“Well yeah, what else would I think?” Tommy furrowed a brow.

“Tommy...” The duck hybrid began quietly, “That was *Dream’s* fault. You don’t- you shouldn’t feel dumb or- or anything bad for any of that! That was *not* your fault.”

The teen was very quiet for a moment, as if assessing it all, and then he looked up.

“You sneaky bastard you almost got me!” He cried, pointing at the beanie-clad man, “Almost had me *reacting* an’ shit!”

Quackity’s jaw dropped.

“That wasn’t some scheme asshole!” He retaliated, “That was genuine! From the heart and shit!”

“Yeah yeah,” Tommy rolled his eyes, “say what you want, Big Q. I know what you *really* meant.” He turned around directly afterwards, leaving Quackity to gape at him.

**He quickly dressed, going out to wait for his friend. He walked quietly across the path, slowly making his way towards tnet.**

**When he did arrive, he sat down quietly on the grass, legs dangling off the side of the ledge he was on. He swung his feet back and forth, humming the tune of *Cat* quietly.**

**And for a moment, he was back in his uniform. The wind blowing through his soft untangled hair, his stomach full and his bones unbroken. For a moment he was staring down at the humble beginnings of his country.**

***“Thought I’d find you up here.”* A voice called.**

Niki and Phil alike seized up.

**Tommy blinked, eyes wide as he turned his head. Wilbur stood behind him, dressed head to toe in that same endearing and not-yet bloody uniform. There were no bags under his eyes, and he was *smiling*.**

**“...What?” Tommy whispered, eyes wide.**

**“I said hello.” A different voice called, slightly unnerved.**

**Tommy blinked once more, and Dream was standing in his brother’s place, dressed head to toe in netherite with that smiley-face mask he knew all too well. He looked down and he wasn’t in his revolutionary uniform, but just some worn and torn old rags, bloodied and hanging on by a thread.**

**Oh. He frowned, before realizing. *Oh.***

**Instantly, he perked up, standing tall and beaming. “Hello!” He chirped happily, all but bouncing over to the man.**

Not a single person in that room was happy with how excited Tommy seemed.

**“Hello,” Dream nodded, a smile in his tone, “are you feeling alright?”**

**“Course I am!” Tommy grinned, “now that you’re here, of course!”**

*Eugh*, Puffy thought quietly to herself, her heart aching for the boy.

**“Awww.” The masked man rolled his eyes endearingly.**

**Without another word Tommy began to dig a hole, almost looking... excited, but the other stopped him, holding a hand out.**

George felt like he was going to be sick.

Tommy was completely frozen, realizing for the first time just how close they were to the end.

**“Later,” Dream told him, “let’s just hang out first.”**

**Tommy smiled, nodding enthusiastically.**



**The screen cut to the two of them laughing inside Logstedshire, both untensed and having fun. The sun was still high in the sky, shining down on them.**

Tommy paled, closing his eyes and silently cursing Drista out as he bit the inside of his cheek.

**“Oh I really wanted to show you Mushroom’s new trick,” Tommy said excitedly, rushing over to the corner, “come here!”**

Sapnap couldn’t help but smile at the way Tommy said Mushroom so endearingly.

**Dream hesitated, walking over to the house that used to belong to Ghostbur. He began to dig a hole, Tommy having his back turned. That was when it happened.**

**“Dream!” The teen cried out, faltering when he got no response for the second time, “...Dream?” He turned on his heel, brows furrowing when his friend was nowhere to be seen.**

“What’s happening?” Phil demanded, leaning in, “What’s going on?”

**Then he saw the hole.**

**All at once his world stopped. Tommy went deathly still, the colour draining from his face.**

*No no no no no no.*

**He took a hesitant step forward, seeing the room exposed to the daylight. “...Dream?” He called again, “are you okay?”**

**He stepped forward once more, further down into the rut, and was met with the sight of Dream rifling through chests. When he saw Tommy in the opening of the hole he paused, closing the chest he'd been in slowly.**

There was absolute silence in the room, everyone terrified of what might come next.

**Tommy was completely silent, rooted to the spot in shock and fear.**

**“Are you...?”**

**Without a word, Dream began to place TNT around the chests. Tommy's eyes widened as he reached out.**

***“Don't-”***

**He didn't even hear the end of his own sentence, the explosion too loud. He was thrown back harshly against the stone, winded as he gasped loudly. In a haze he looked down at his arms, staring bewildered at the burns. He wasn't sure he'd ever been that close before.**

The others cringed at the loud sound. Tommy clamped his hands over his ears, turning to the side and scrunching his eyes up tight.

**Distantly, he thought it might've hurt.**

**Dream stepped back into the crater, not hesitating as he began to dig into the stone. He turned to the teen.**

**“Put your things in the hole, Tommy.” He bit out, voice dangerously low.**

Fundy frowned, tail flicking anxiously and ears pinned back.

**“But-”**

**With a blink, there was an arrow lodged in Tommy’s shoulder, and he stumbled back, eyes wide, before slowly looking down.**

Many members of the group cried out at that. Puffy felt tears gathering in her eyes, her bottom lip quivering.

The pure panic reveling in the uncertainty of what Dream would do next was almost too much to bear.

Phil’s wings hiked up, as though he was seeing red.

**With a delayed furrow of his brow, he reached for the arrow, ripping it out and staring down at its blood-coated tip. His lips parted in shock, blood pouring from the wound.**

**“Now.” Dream snarled, standing over the pit.**

Technoblade’s grip on the armrests tightened.

**Tommy blinked back tears, frowning deeply.**

**“All of my things?” He whispered, looking down.**

**Dream didn’t say anything, only stepping forward and swinging at the blond. Tommy fell to the ground roughly, already bloodied and injured shoulder taking the brunt of the impact.**

**“All of your things.”**

**“But I-”**

**“Tommy, you *lied* to me!” Dream cried out, kicking the boy in the stomach harshly,  
“You *hid things* from me!”**

Tommy cringed at the muffled sounds, pressing harder on his ears. Gritting his teeth as he tried to block it all out.

**“No!”** Puffy all but shrieked, eyes wide with horror.

**“I’m sorry, I-”**

**“You’re not sorry,” the masked man hissed, “don’t you fucking say you’re sorry. Just put your things in the hole.”**

**Tommy choked on a sob, clutching at his midsection as he rose, standing on shaking legs as he bit back tears.**

**“But-”**

**“How about you get in the hole, Tommy?” Dream tilted his head, taking a menacing step forward, “Since you think you’re in *any* position to argue with me right now.”**

Tommy couldn’t help but whine at that, digging his nails into his ears.

“Stop it...” He muttered quietly, trying to get the memories out of his head, “*Please!*”

Ranboo looked over, eyes wide with concern and welling with tears he was pushing back desperately.

“Tommy-”

“I’m sorry!” Tommy hissed, still curled in on himself, “I’m sorry, Dream!”

An instantaneous wave of panic flooded throughout the room as the moment they’d all been simultaneously dreading and anticipating came.

Sure, they’d wanted Tommy to have some sort of reaction, but at the same time, the thought of something that could make him panic or break down when everything they’d already seen couldn’t was *extremely* unnerving.

“Tommy,” Ranboo called again, voice even, “Tommy it’s me, Ranboo, okay? Dream’s not here. Dream is *not* here.”

The blond choked on a gasp, heaving for air.

Puffy, despite being in the back row, all but clambered to the front, stepping on and practically trampling people. They didn’t look the least bit upset, however; all of their attention was on Tommy.

“You’re safe, Tommy.” She urged, kneeling at his side, “You’re okay, honey.”

“No,” the blond shook his head, “*no!*”

“Tommy you’re okay.” Tubbo murmured, leaning in, eyes wide with tears, “Yeah big man?”

The teen clenched his eyes shut tighter.

“Open your eyes, Tommy.” Ranboo pressed, “Please.”

Tommy whined, but pried them open all the same. The enderman hybrid didn’t want to think of just how blindly obedient his friend was there.

Tommy locked eyes with Ranboo, *Ranboo* of all people, who should have looked away, should have shied away, but he *didn’t*.

How could he? It was *Tommy*.

“*Ranboo?*” Tommy whispered, hands shaking.

“Yes,” The enderman hybrid nodded, “*yes!* It’s me, Tommy. You’re safe, okay?”

“Dream...” The blond murmured, pulling at his hair, “I’m so sorry....”

Phil looked like he was going to be ill at the back.

“Dream isn’t here, Tommy.” Tubbo juttled in, and instantly Tommy turned to him, eyes wide.

“Tubbo,” He gasped, “Tubbo I’m sorry!”

“Stop apologizing,” Tubbo shook his head, tears streaming down his face, “*Please*, Tommy it’s okay.”

“Tommy, it's Puffy, okay?” The elder woman cut in, “Just like last time you’re going to follow my breathing, yeah? We’re gonna go slow and easy. Just me and you.”

The other people in the room watched morosely as the two counted down from ten, breathing in and out slowly. Tubbo and Ranboo were just inches away, terrified and gripping each other’s hands.

Karl sobbed quietly, gripping onto Sapnap’s hand for dear life.

And eventually, after what felt like hours, Tommy’s breathing had gone back to normal, and he was sitting with his head bowed, and shoulders hiked up.

They sat in silence for a few minutes.

“Tommy-”

“I’m fine,” The blond grit out, “I- It won’t happen again.”

Almost everyone in the room was taken aback.

“What?” Puffy faltered, eyes widening slightly, “no Tommy I- I don’t care how many more times you do this I just- want to know if you’re *okay*.”

Tommy bristled at the words, stiffening before turning away slightly. “I already said I’m fine. Thanks or whatever but you can go back to your spot now.”

Puffy frowned, “but I don’t... I don’t want you here anymore.”

The teen’s eyes widened, and he tensed.

“Oh my god!” She shook her head, “No not like that I’m sorry!” her cheeks went red with embarrassment, “I just- I meant I don’t want you *here*. I don’t want you somewhere this bad for you, Tommy.” her tone softened slightly, “This isn’t good for you.”

He seemed to dislike that statement for whatever reason.

“Well, I’m sticking around, so tough.” He bit out.

“You can’t honestly *want* to be here... right?” Sapnap asked hesitantly.

“Fuck no,” Tommy laughed bitterly, shaking his head, “but I sure as hell don’t want you lot watching without me having a clue what you’re seeing... So I guess you’re stuck with me, yeah?”

“That is the most *fucked* logic.” Fundy muttered.

Tommy didn’t reply, and without anything to say, they were forced to go back to watching. Puffy, however, sat on the floor in front of Ranboo and Tommy, refusing to go all the way to the back.

Just in case Tommy needed her again.

**“No,” Tommy gasped out, shaking his head as tears streamed down his face and his shirt became further soaked with blood, “please no. I’m so-”**



**“Shut up.”**

Instantly, their anger that had been replaced by concern, returned tenfold.

Tommy was completely still and silent, staring at the ground, refusing to move.

**Tommy nodded silently, eyes wide as he opened his inventory, dropping everything but the pictures of Tubbo into the hole. He coughed harshly, wincing and whining at the action.**

**Dream didn't so much as look at him, dropping and lighting the TNT before moving above ground.**

**Hastily, Tommy scrambled to follow him. He winced at the harsh sun, taking a step back before scanning the area for Dream. His eyes widened at the sight of explosives beside the Prime Log.**

Not a single one of them could move, not a single one of them even felt like they could *react*. It just didn't feel *real*. It didn't feel possible.

**“No!” He cried out, the adrenaline of the moment pumping through his veins as he ignored the pain, racing over. He destroyed the TNT without hesitation, panicking.**

**Still, Dream placed down more within seconds, and before Tommy even knew what was happening, he was laying on his side, ears ringing as Dream stood over him, the Prime Log nowhere to be found.**

**Dream's shadow casted over him. “Get up.” He commanded roughly. “I want you to watch.”**

No one could even fathom commenting. They were too morbidly engrossed, completely consumed by the screen.

**Tommy sobbed quietly, scrambling to his feet and ignoring the tremors in his body. He followed after the man, mumbling nonsense apologies, even as they approached the tent.**

**“Please I’m so *so* sorry I-” His eyes widened, watching Dream tear down the web as he stalked inside the tent, “what are you-”**

**Dream had lit the TNT before he’d even registered what was happening.**

**“*No!*” He shrieked, surging forward.**

**He was thrown back once again by the blast, Dream unphased.**

**Tommy stared at the remains of the tent, eyes wide with horror. He crawled over, looking at the charred ashes.**

***Blue.***

**And *oh.***

**If that wasn’t a punch to the gut.**

**Karl turned to apologize, to say he was sorry that Tommy had lost her, but froze when he saw the blond.**

**For some reason, the sight of Tommy before him was too much to handle, and he remained quiet.**

**His eyes scanned all around, for any sort of movement anywhere around them for *anything*, but he found nothing.**

***No no no no no-***

“Oh Tommy...” Puffy whispered, tears streaming down her face.

Niki wept silently.

**He was hoisted to his feet by a hand on the back of his collar, dragging him up. Dream intended for him to follow, and so he did.**

**In a shocked, bloody, and burnt daze, Tommy followed, eyes wide and tears pooling down his face.**

**“It’s time for you to start over, Tommy.” Dream announced, breaking the nether portal as he did.**

**“...What?”**

**“I thought we were *friends* !” Dream cried out, whirling around and closing in on him.**

*Get away from him. Get away from him.*

**“We are!” Tommy sobbed, “You’re my *best friend*!”**

Tubbo let out a choked whine, crying loudly.

**“You lied to me, Tommy!” The masked man retaliated, “You lied!”**

**The blond continued to string along incomprehensible apologies as he followed Dream, babbling like a madman and begging for forgiveness. The smell of gunpowder hung low in the air, and Tommy was finding it hard to breathe.**

**Then, Dream put a pickaxe through Mushroom Henry’s skull, and she fell to the ground with a thump.**

Tommy cringed, nails digging into his skin. He hadn’t been looking but he knew what had happened all the same.

A collective gasp of horror rang throughout the room.

**A silence stretched out between them, Tommy staring in abject horror.**

**“You... You killed her...” He whispered, eyes wide. “*You killed her!*”**

Tommy grit his teeth.

**He watched the blood trickle out of her eyes and the hole in her head, leaking down closer to his feet on the uneven ground. He turned to the side, retching up what was left of the last meal he’d had a day prior.**

Niki had to turn as well, emptying the contents of her stomach onto the floor, as many others swallowed back bile.

**“Please,” he sobbed, turning back, “please *stop*, Dream.”**

Phil pursed his lips, tears dripping down his chin.

**The man in question stared at him for a long moment, splattered in the cow's blood and brains, his eerie smile ever present, before sighing.**

**"You can't go to the nether, Tommy." He began, stalking forward, "No one can come visit you until you learn to listen."**

"...What?"

**Tommy swallowed back tears, throat sore and raw. He frowned. "I- I did lis-"**

**"No." Dream interrupted, "You didn't." He took another step closer, "This is why I exiled you. This is why Tubbo exiled you. All you had to do was listen, Tommy."**

"That's why *he* exiled you?" Tubbo hissed, eyes narrowed at the screen. He was shaking, unable to stop.

**The blond flinched, shrinking in on himself. Blood still seeped from his shoulder, but perhaps by a stroke of luck (or misfortune), it hadn't been too deep of a wound.**

**"The rules were simple," Dream shook his head, "all you had to do was give me your things! And there were days where I didn't even take anything!" he laughed, "I was *so good* to you, Tommy! And you took advantage of that!"**

*"I'll fucking kill him."* Quackity whispered, eyes wide. "I will fucking *kill* him."

**Tommy's arms were coated in dark burns, some of them already bubbling up with fluid and pus. "I'm sorry..." He whispered.**

**“But you just- you *had* to wriggle around and defy me!” Another step forward.**

“You didn’t do anything wrong.” Puffy shook her head, “You didn’t do anything wrong, Tommy.”

**“No but-” Tommy blinked back tears, “but I wasn’t- I mean *look at me*, Dream. I wasn’t planning on going much longer!” He frowned, “And it’s not your fault, no it’s mine. It’s my fault, but still!”**

**“Tommy,” Dream began, shaking his head and chuckling quietly to himself, “you were never... you know...”**

***Going back. You were never going back.***

“You were, though!” Tubbo cried out, “I wouldn’t have- *You were coming back!*”

Tommy remained silent, fists clenched angrily.

**The smell of burnt flesh wafted through the air, and Tommy thought he might’ve been sick for a second time.**

**“So you need to start over.” Dream stated, “Plain and simple. Just, y’know, don’t mess up this time. Do better.”**

Jack felt as though he was about to throw up.

**Tommy stared at the smoke billowing up in the air, dark and corroding.**

**“But you’ll still... you’ll still visit me, right?” He asked, voice barely audible. “Every day?”**

Niki ran an erratic hand through her hair, crying.

**“Well maybe not *every* day.” Dream snorted, rolling his eyes.**

**“H-How- Once a week?” He questioned, “O-Once a week?”**

**“Well, yeah,” The older man shrugged, “at least.”**

**Tommy smiled shakily, as if that was the best news he’d ever heard. A small silence grew between them.**

George wiped at his face quietly, sniffing.

**“So... I can’t- I mean- can I not *see* people anymore? Can no one visit me?” He asked hesitantly, scared to break the shaky calm.**

**Dream sighed, as though he was dealing with a toddler. “Tommy you have to understand,” he pressed, “you hid chests from me. I don’t even- what were you going to do with those things? Kill me? Hurt me?”**

**“No!” Tommy shook his head vehemently, “never! I just-” he paused, looking down, as though he was ashamed, “I just wanted to have a place where I had things that belonged to *me*. I just wanted something that was *mine* again.”**

*The discs were all he had. Even when Tubbo and Wilbur weren’t there, he still had the discs.*

He waited for Dream to reply, waited for the man to say *anything*, but it never came.

“I’m really sorry I-”

“That’s enough, Tommy.” Dream interrupted, sounding annoyed, “Just listen to me, okay? You cannot go to the nether. You cannot have visitors. You cannot do *anything* unless I say it’s okay, alright? You are *alone*.”

Puffy sobbed into her hands.

Tommy took a step back.

“As soon as I think that you have changed and become somebody who isn't going to hide and lie and try and revolt, people can visit you again.” Dream told him, “I have been *nothing* but gracious to you, and this is how you repay me?”

The blond was quiet, staring at the craters in the ground. Staring at it *all*. Blue was dead. Mushroom Henry was dead.

It really was all his fault.

“Think about what you did, Tommy.” Was all Dream said before leaving Tommy alone, bleeding and burnt in the ruins of what used to be his home.

It was oddly reminiscent.

None of them could even deal with the sight of it. Tommy was so *small*. Covered in blood and soot and *alone*.



**And so Tommy rose from his place, stumbling around in the remains of Logstedshire. His eyes were fogged over and hazy, as though he was in a complete daze.**

**He walked until he was on a hill, right beside his tower, tall enough to stare down at the ashes.**

**And then he began to build.**

The room dropped in temperature almost instantly, and Ranboo felt his stomach drop.

**He towered up with no sign of stopping, tears tracking down his face.**

**“I can’t do this anymore...” He muttered, the ground growing all the more distant. “I just can’t.”**

Tubbo couldn’t even hold back his sob at that, burying his face in his hands and weeping. Tommy was... Tommy had... It was just too much.

**“Dream, my friend, my *only* friend... he’s gone. Because of me.”**

“Not because of you.” Jack hissed.

**“He *told* me he’d come back to watch me every week, though. He did.”**

**For a moment he continued to tower, and then he abruptly stopped, furrowing a brow.**

***“Are you... Do you see anything wrong with the way that Dream guy treats you?”***  
**Mexican Dream’s voice rang through his mind.**

**He shook his head, continuing to tower. “He’s my *friend*,” he insisted, as if angry with himself, “Dream is my *friend*.”**

For a moment there, they’d almost been hopeful.

**Tommy continued on his way up, trying to shake the conflicting feeling that something was undeniably wrong with the whole situation.**

**“He would come to visit. He was the *only* one who would come to visit! And he was so nice to me!” He pressed, trying to reason with himself.**

***“I mean like, it’s not normal, dude. He... he hits you, and he takes your things, man. That’s not right.”***

**The ground was a distant memory at that point, and he found the air was much thinner up that high.**

**“He said he’d come to watch me.” Tommy declared, standing tall upon his tower.**

**“He said he’d come to *watch* me.” He repeated, furrowing his brow.**

They watched with bated breath and wide eyes.

*Please. Please. Please.*

**The clouds drifted all around him, the sun setting a brilliant orange and painting the sky with vibrant colours.**

There was a very long pause, where Tommy looked to be thinking extremely hard, as if recalling every little moment from exile, and perhaps before.

“He’s my fr- my friend. He’s my- He was just here- He’s my *friend* but he was just here to watch me but- but- he’s my friend but he was never- he was always just here- he was just here to *watch me!*” He angrily pulled at his hair, tears pricking at his eyes.

Technoblade grit his teeth, frowning deeply.

He stumbled slightly, teetering on the edge, and he laughed loudly, a sob bubbling in his throat.

Ranboo let out a startled sound of panic, having to look over at the Tommy beside him to reassure himself.

“*He was just here to watch me.*” He whispered, smiling.

And he let himself fall.

Tubbo leaned forwards, eyes wide.

His body made contact with the water in the little pond and on reflex he sucked in, inhaling all the water. As he flailed in the pond he coughed and hacked, thrashing to reach the side. His shoulder was still numb, or perhaps *he* was, but he made it to land all the same, practically throwing up a lung as he did.

If Tommy was being honest with himself, he *still* wasn’t sure if he’d actually been aiming for the pond or if it had just been meant to be.

At the moment he found himself wishing he’d missed the water by a longshot.

Everyone else, however, seemed ecstatic. Relaxing in their seats, some of the more extroverted ones (Quackity and Fundy) cheering loudly.

**All he knew was that he was alive, and that he needed to get the *fuck* out of there. So he clumsily stood on his bruised feet, still missing a shoe, and began to limp in the direction of Technoblade's house.**

And just like that it was over.

...Just like that, right?

Because clearly, that had been the worst of it. He'd escaped and eventually ended up putting Dream in *prison*, yeah?

As some of them continued to cry, their tears turning to those of relief, Technoblade found himself growing weary; Tommy was caught in the same predicament.

There was still much more to come.

# feverish

## Chapter Summary

short and sweet.

slight emetophobia warning but i think that's it for this chapter!

Of all the things Tommy had been forced to sit through in life, whether it be lessons on wilderness survival, or a presentation on the strategy for their next battle, this was certainly the least boring.

Still, that didn't mean it was enjoyable.

It was quite the opposite, actually.

If Tommy had been livid before, it only became more and more pronounced as he continued to watch.

He knew Drista had good intentions, he did, and he wanted to give her the benefit of the doubt; he *had* given her the benefit of the doubt, but after that last memory he knew she'd officially gone too far.

Clearly, she wanted him dead or exploited. That was the only reasonable explanation.

Why else would she show his weaknesses on a fucking big screen? Why else would she invite people who wished harm onto him to 'how to take advantage of Tommyinnit 101'?

What was going to happen the next time he decided to 'borrow' something from someone and they began to dig a hole? What was going to happen when they realized how *easy* it was

to get on Tommy's good side; how even his biggest enemy could become his best friend with enough affection and empty promises?

To be fair, he didn't think the worst of the people around him. He actually liked to assume people were good before anything else.

The issue, however, was that he'd *done* that; multiple times, actually, and he'd been hurt because of it.

Did he *really* think Tubbo or Puffy would exploit his trauma? Not really, no. But was there even the smallest *possibility* of them doing so? Absolutely.

You couldn't trust anyone.

*Not even your brothers.*

Call him selfish, call him self-centered and self-absorbed, but at the end of the day Tommy *knew* everyone was out to get him.

He'd been told enough times that he was too suspicious, that not everyone was trying to hurt or leave him, but he'd been abandoned and beaten down enough to know it was a fucking *lie*.

So, yeah, he was bloody pissed at Drista.

He knew it wasn't entirely her fault, that she *was* trying to help in her own godly way, but he'd be lying if he said it wasn't a pain in his side.

She seemed to have this preconceived notion that everyone would see his little sob story and just decide that they didn't want him dead anymore. People who *hated* him would suddenly, what, choose to not hate him?

Good fucking luck.

Maybe with enough begging and pleading he could get Drista to wipe him from existence or something.

That'd be nice.

Tommy pursed his lips, looking down and feeling his hand itch. Ranboo's own hand was just inches away, and he'd be lying if he said he didn't want to grab it.

He'd been watching throughout the entirety of the memories with rapt attention as Tubbo and Ranboo alike seemed to know exactly when to grab and hold each other. He watched how they'd hold each other's hands and lean on one another, and it made his chest twist painfully.

He wanted that.

He'd always been big on affectionate touch. Whether it was holding Wilbur's hand when they went on walks in the woods or hugging Tubbo a little too tight, it was what made him feel safest and loved.

Too bad Dream had managed to ruin even that.

Despite the fact that Tommy so badly craved physical touch he knew it would burn him. He knew that the second he felt someone's hand upon his shoulder he could feel Dream's hands on his neck. He knew that if someone were to brush shoulders with him he'd be painfully aware of what it felt like to *feel*, having been dead without a body for months.

Maybe he was struggling with it. Just a little bit.

There was also the undeniable fear that if he were the one to initiate the contact that they'd pull away. He was tired of pushing people too far, tired of being rejected, tired of being abandoned.

Everyone was always just moments away from abandoning him.

So when the screen started up, and he saw Ranboo lean slightly closer to Tubbo, he had to swallow back bile.

**It wasn't till he was about halfway through the plains that the reality of the situation hit Tommy.**

**He'd been quietly dragging himself through the dirt, slowly drying off from the pond, right arm practically useless, and his whole body aching. The sun was almost completely gone from the sky, the stars beginning to show. Crickets chirped in the tall grass, the light of a village not too far off.**

**And all at once, without warning, Tommy stopped dead in his tracks, eyes wide.**

**"Blue..." He muttered quietly, holding his shoulder tightly, "Mushroom Henry... *Oh my god...*"**

Karl winced sympathetically.

**His knees wobbled, as though he was going to fall, and he ran a shaky hand, his good one, through his matted hair.**

**"They're dead." He whispered, eyes glassy, "They're *actually* dead."**

Niki held her ground, though the sight of the cow's brains was still fresh in her mind.



She could sympathize with Tommy and still hate him, and exile was over, so she had nothing else to fear. She'd watched the community house fight, she *knew* how selfish he could be.

**The wind howled behind him, nearly pushing him over. He stared down at his hands, eyes wandering further down towards the bubbling wounds on his forearms. They were raw and red, burning even in the cold night air. His shoulder was somehow numb, and the thought should have worried him, but it didn't.**

George tried not to gag, feeling a tugging at his heart.

**"It's my fault... *It's all my fault.*" His bottom lip trembled.**

"Tommy *no*," Ranboo whispered, shaking his head, "none of that was your fault."

"Yeah okay," Tommy snorted, rolling his eyes, "sure."

"Stop that," Phil narrowed his eyes, "it *wasn't* your fault, Tommy."

"Look," The younger leveled his father with a hardened stare, "I know I was being fuckin manipulated and shit, but that doesn't change the fact that they died *because* I hid things from Dream."

"But you shouldn't have had to hide things in the first place!" Puffy butted in, others around her nodding along.

"But I did," Tommy managed through grit teeth, "I *chose* to hide things and they died because of it. End of fucking discussion."

"Tommy-"

“I am not opposed to fucking clarting you in the face, Ranboo.” He hissed.

“Noted,” Ranboo nodded, lips pressed into a thin line, “we’ll discuss this later then.”

Tommy shot a glare.

Not if he had anything to say about it.

**Before it had even really registered in his mind, he’d whirled around, staring back in the direction he’d come.**

**“I have to go back,” he began, a hint of fear in his tone, “I- I have to go back Dream’s going to be so *mad* at me!”**

A jolt went through Sam’s spine.

**He panicked, whining quietly as his gaze flicked back and forth between ahead and behind.**

They watched, tense with the worry that Tommy would end up returning, tense with the worry that they *hadn’t* actually seen the end of exile.

**“But I can’t! He’ll know- He’ll find out I tried to leave and... and he’ll be even *angrier*...” His hands came up to pull at his hair, grabbing fistfuls and tugging harshly. “I’m gonna be in so much trouble.” He whispered, tears gathering in his eyes.**

**He looked back in the direction of Techno’s base, hands falling to his side. He pursed his lips, nervously swallowing back his fear.**

**“I can’t go back,” he shook his head, “I just- I can’t. He wasn’t even my friend, he- he hurt me.” His voice cracked on the last two words, and his brows furrowed.**

Sometimes Tommy dreamt about what would have happened if he had gone back. The funny part was that nothing ever really changed. He still ended up the same.

**And so, without much more prompting from himself; just a lot of conflicted panic, he continued on his way, whispering apologies to his fallen friends.**

A wave of relief washed over the room.

**Eventually, he reached the tiny cottage buried in the snowy hills. He’d seen it before, but that same pool of dread made itself present in his stomach.**

**The wound in his shoulder had reopened at some point during the journey, and the blood had frozen to his shirt, making it stiff and uncomfortable. His nose and cheeks were rosy red, his eyes a similar pinkish hue, eyelashes crusted with frost, barely able to keep open.**

Phil could barely stomach the sight of his youngest, frowning deeply.

**His teeth chattered in the wind, and even the unwounded patches of skin looked rough and raw in the cold. His sock was soaked with frozen blood, causing him to limp, almost dragging his leg.**

**His eyes lit up slightly at the sight of the house, a thin trail of blood pouring out of his nose as he smiled softly.**

**“Just a quick stop.” He muttered, “In and out.”**

Technoblade snorted, rolling his eyes.

**He didn't even have time to greet Carl like he would have, in too much pain and in fear of Technoblade showing up at any moment. He carefully stepped into the lower area of the house, treading lightly.**

**"Hello?" He called, hugging himself tightly.**

**There was no reply, and honestly, Tommy wasn't sure if he was relieved or disappointed.**

**As gently as he could, he made his way further into the house, stopping before an assortment of chests and kneeling beside them.**

**He winced at the loud creak of one of the chests opening, but quickly threw all caution to the wind when he got a look at what was inside.**

**His eyes went wide, lighting up with wonder.**

**"Oh my *god!*" He all but laughed, rummaging around. His hands brushed over stacks upon stacks of supplies, and when he found the assortment of potions he couldn't contain himself.**

Jack couldn't help but let a small smile slip at that. Despite the many things that had changed, apparently Tommy being a thieving little shit wasn't one of them.

**With a greedy little grin, he uncorked the bottle of what he hoped was a strength potion and chugged it all down in one go.**

**He probably should have gone after potions of healing but he wasn't exactly in the best headspace at that moment.**

“Dude, pace yourself.” Sapnap commented.

**Tommy continued to snatch various things, a small bit of glee in his face as he did. When he opened the chest farthest to the left, however, he stopped dead in his tracks.**

**“Holy *shit!*” He laughed incredulously, scanning the rows of golden apples. Without hesitation he reached in, snatching one of them and hungrily sinking his teeth into it.**

**Tears gathered in his eyes as he all but devoured the apple in moments, feeling its effects take over. He laughed, stuffing more and more into his inventory.**

He seemed almost like a desperate and wounded animal in those moments. It was slightly unnerving.

“You should really be focusing on healing yourself.” Jack mumbled.

“My body, my choice.” Tommy declared loudly.

“That’s not... Oh whatever.” The older man sighed, rubbing at his temple.

**Once he was satisfied with his haul, meaning he physically couldn’t fit anything else in his inventory, he all but clambered up the ladder behind him, making his way to the top floor.**

**He paused for a moment, taking in the room and all its charm, before peering out the window anxiously. He had to leave; Technoblade could be coming back at any moment.**

**“I have to go,” He told himself, though he didn’t sound the least bit enthused, “if he finds me here...”**

“I wasn’t gonna *kill* you or anything,” Technoblade scrunched up his face, “geez.”

“And how exactly was I supposed to know that?” Tommy raised a brow.

“So you just assume the worst of people?” The older shot back.

Tommy bristled for a moment. “Yeah,” he snarked, “absolutely I fuckin do. Hate the lot of you.”

**The last time they’d seen each other things hadn’t gone very well. Tommy could still remember the words his brother had shouted at him.**

***“You want to be a hero, Tommy? Then die like one!”***

Technoblade tried not to cringe at the words, ignoring the way his father tensed beside him.

**He shivered quietly, shaking his head. The golden apples had numbed a lot of his pain, making him near oblivious of the damage he was doing by further exerting his injuries.**

“Dude, *sit down!*” Quackity hissed, tone slightly panicked.

**“I really don’t want to leave, though,” he muttered, frowning, “he has so much *stuff!*”**

“It’s called workin’ hard, Tommy.”

“It’s called shut the fuck up shut the fuck up!”

Tommy let out a quiet huff, taking another cautious look out the tiny window, before his face lit up. He had an idea.

“I’m not leaving,” he grinned, “oh hell no I’m not.” He chuckled, quickly making his way down the ladder and back to the lowest floor.

“Little shit.” Phil laughed.

Tommy couldn’t help the warmth that bloomed in his chest. It happened every time he made his dad laugh or smile, no matter how hard he tried to push it down.

He dug down through polished stone, expecting to find dirt or rock. Instead, he fell right through into another floor.

Letting out a tiny *oomph!* as he hit the ground, wincing at the impact on his injuries, he sat up and looked around.

“Secret room.” He whispered quietly, a small smile on his face.

Because who would expect a secret room *under* another secret room?

It was definitely foolproof.

“A secret room does nothing if I come home to you standin' in my living room, Tommy.” Techno commented.

“Well *excuse me* for not being able to hear you coming!” The blond hissed, flipping him off.

**The cow in the hidden area merely stared at him, unimpressed. He paid it no mind, quickly getting to work as he summoned a diamond pickaxe he'd stolen. He began to dig into the ground, a tiny grin on his face as he muttered quiet nothings to himself.**

**Eventually, with enough hard work and aching limbs, he'd made himself a rather comfortable den. His brow was slick with sweat and the golden apples had begun to wear off, but he was content with himself. The area was even sparsely decorated with things he'd stolen.**

**It was quaint.**

**Within just minutes of completion, however, he sank to the ground, laying his face down on the cool stone and shivering. He wrapped his arms around himself, teeth chattering, and his vision went dark.**

Puffy frowned at the screen, relying on the fact that Tommy was real and behind her to keep herself grounded.

She'd been optimistic at first, hoping that the worst was over, but she was beginning to grow weary. Things just didn't feel quite right between Techno and Tommy, and it made her uneasy. She'd also been making a point to ignore the prison, choosing to believe Drista wouldn't show it.

So she pushed back the worry, telling herself that things could only go uphill and telling herself that she wouldn't have to watch a boy she loved like her own suffer anymore.

**When Tommy awoke it was with a splitting headache and a groan. He was covered head to toe in a thin layer of sweat, yet he was freezing. The stone was harsh and unforgiving beneath his brittle bones.**

**He tried to roll over onto his side, only to feel a searing pain in both his shoulder and foot. Letting out an ungodly shriek, he began to desperately fish in his inventory, not stopping until he'd pulled out a golden apple and hungrily devoured it.**



**He let out a content sigh, relaxing slightly as the effects came to life, enveloping his body in a warm fuzzy feeling.**

“I think you’re a little *too* attached to those things...” Tubbo muttered wearily.

**Of course, he couldn’t stay like that forever, and when the gravity of the situation hit him he was on his feet almost instantly despite the pain. He limped over to the mouth of his den, peering up and listening closely.**

**After deeming it ‘safe’ he clumsily hurried up the ladder, swallowing back whines and protests as his injuries screamed at him to stop.**

“You seriously need to sit down,” Puffy whined, “you’re gonna give me grey hairs!”

“Your hair is already white, Puffy.”

**He needed to steal more things. He needed to get stronger. He just needed *stuff*.**

**As quietly and carefully as he could, Tommy took the extra time to test out floorboards before he stepped on them and to avoid even brushing against anything. He went out of his way to not move a single thing or make a single peep. He put *extra* caution into lifting the chest’s lid as slowly as he could.**

“Pretty graceful for someone like you.” Fundy hummed.

“The fuck’s that supposed to mean?” Tommy glared.

**Of course, it was all for nothing when only moments later the front door swung open.**

**Tommy froze in his movements, eyes going wide and hands stopping midair. His head whipped in the direction of the sound.**

**Technoblade stood in the doorway, looking disheveled and also somewhat surprised. His long hair was ratty and dripping with blood, and his clothes were splattered as if he'd walked through a slaughterhouse. His eyes were tired and his clothes rumpled unceremoniously.**

**“Oh shit.”**

**For a moment the two just stared at each other, as if they were in disbelief.**

**And then? Tommy bolted like his life depended on it.**

**Fear-induced adrenaline pumping in his veins, he barely felt any pain as he all but scrambled for the door; squeezing underneath Technoblade's legs and making a mad dash for the outdoors.**

**His freedom was short-lived however, as he was roughly hoisted up by the back of his shirt.**

***“Help!”* he cried out, kicking and screaming as he dangled in the air, “Help me!”**

**“To-”**

**“Stranger danger!” Tommy yelled, twisting and turning in Techno's grip, “Stranger danger! Stranger Da-”**

**A couple of them laughed at that, and even Phil cracked a grin.**

**“I’m your brother.” Technoblade interrupted, unimpressed.**

Both Tommy and Techno seized at the words, doing their best to ignore them.

**Tommy paused for just a moment, eyes widening a fraction, before he went back to kicking and fighting, yelling for help. The piglin hybrid rolled his eyes.**

**It was only moments later that the boy went limp in his grasp, heaving and gasping for air, sweating profoundly.**

“Wow...” Quackity stared at the screen, as though slightly unnerved, “You’re really sick dude.”

“It was nothingggg,” Tommy waved it off.

Technoblade knew for a fact that it was not ‘nothing’.

**“Are you done-”**

**Technoblade was interrupted by a series of harsh coughs as the boy in his grip hacked loudly. He made a face, dropping him to the ground.**

**The second Tommy’s feet hit the floor, however, a searing jolt of pain went up throughout his entire body and he cried out, vision going dim.**

Phil winced in sympathy.

The older and taller man furrowed a brow, watching as his younger brother wavered in place, looking dazed. He subconsciously reached out a steadying hand, but the boy slapped it away angrily.

“What’re you doing in my house, Tommy?” Technoblade sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose.

“How are you?” Tommy grinned up at him.

He narrowed his eyes. “What are you doing in my house, Tommy?” He reiterated, slower that time.

“*How are you?*” The teen replied, slightly annoyed.

“Dude you are so annoying.”

Tommy laughed loudly.

“*What are you doing-*”

“Technoblade you are a *bitch!*” Tommy cried out angrily, still swaying slightly on his feet, “You need to shut the fuck u-” He froze, eyes going wide.

The older man furrowed a brow, about to lean in and ask what was happening when Tommy all but *lurched* to the side, emptying the contents of his stomach into the snow. The blond stared down at it for a moment, as if questioning where it had come from, before turning back to his older brother.

George made a face, looking away.

**“Women do *not* find that sort of thing attractive...” He muttered as the other looked at him as if he’d grown a second head.**

**Technoblade looked the boy up and down, realizing for the first time how *horrible* he looked. His gaze was specifically stuck on the bloody sock and patch of red near Tommy’s shoulder.**

**“You really do look horrible there, Tommy.” Sam frowned.**

**“I still look better than any of you on any day, bitch!” The blond flipped him off.**

**“I was being sympathetic.”**

**He pursed his lips, as if internally debating something, before sighing.**

**“Get in the house.” He muttered, gesturing behind him.**

Phil felt his heart soar, despite the fact that it was such a small gesture. He’d always worried about whether or not his boys would look out for each other, and the pit had done nothing if not made him feel worse.

**Tommy blinked, as if taken aback. “Beg your pardon?”**

**“Get in the house before you freeze to death, Tommy.” Technoblade grumbled, not looking very excited.**

**“But-”**

**“We’ll talk *inside*.” He pushed firmly, “Go sit on the couch.”**

“That’s awfully nice of you, Techno.” Niki commented.

“I think it’s basic human decency actually,” Tubbo blurted out, receiving a harsh look from the girl. “Y’know like- like not letting someone die in the snow is probably just a given.”

**Tommy nodded wordlessly, watching as his older brother disappeared into another room. He stepped back inside, closing the door behind him and shakily making his way to the seating area. He almost collapsed before he got there, panting.**

**He laid down on the couch, curling onto his side and clenching his eyes shut tight. With the effects of both the golden apples and his adrenaline gone, he was in *terrible* pain.**

Jack was starting to feel bad for the boy, something he hadn’t seen happening, but ever since their conversation he found it so much harder to be angry at the boy.

As he sat there, staring at the tiny shivering frame of his former friend, he couldn’t help but feel... *bad*.

**A loud thud beside him caused him to rocket into a sitting position, and he instantly cried out at the movement, clutching at his chest.**

**Technoblade was sitting before him, a medkit on the coffee table.**

Phil smiled softly to himself.

**“The fuck are you doing?” Tommy mumbled, laying back down.**

**“You’re hurt.” His older brother pointed out, as though it were the most obvious thing in the world.**

**“And what of it?” He muttered, closing his eyes.**

**He didn’t see the look Technoblade gave him. “Well believe it or not some of us are good people, Tommy. And I’m not gonna let you bleed out in the snow.”**

“Props to you and all but maybe next time don’t insinuate he’s not a good person,” Puffy said, never taking her eyes off the screen.

Techno furrowed a brow. It hadn’t sounded so condescending when he’d first said it.

**“Bleeding stopped a long time ago.” Tommy said point blank, “dumbass.” He added on.**

“Look at Captain Obvious over here.” Tubbo rolled his eyes.

“Piss off man!”

**Though he couldn’t see it, he heard Techno sigh loudly, shifting in his spot.**

**“Then consider this a favour,” the piglin hummed, “out of the kindness of my heart.”**

“Or, you know,” Phil began, “and humor me, but maybe that’s just what brothers do for each other.”

Both Tommy and Techno’s ears went red.

**It smelled like pine and hay in the cottage.**

**“Still wouldn’t make up for what you did to Tubbo...”**

Tubbo froze as Tommy scowled, looking away.

**As if on cue, Tommy’s eyes shot open, realizing what he’d said. He turned towards the older, holding nothing but fear in his gaze as he put his arms up to defend himself and spewed apologies.**

Ranboo felt himself grow angry at the sight, grip on his armrest tightening.

Tommy looked down.

**But no punishment ever came.**

**Tommy lifted his gaze over his forearm, noticing Technoblade just... sitting there, staring at him.**

**“Just let me do this.” His older brother said finally after a long bout of silence. “I don’t feel like interrogating you when you’re delirious from whatever life-threatening fever you’ve managed to get.”**

**He nodded wordlessly, too tired and pained to argue. The couch was the first soft thing he’d slept on in what felt like years, and distantly he could hear the water boiling on the stove and firewood crackling to his left.**

**It almost felt like the days when Wilbur had cared for him back home when he was sick.**

**He drifted off to a warmth he hadn’t known in much too long.**



They weren't very used to ending on anything that could be considered a happy note. It almost felt weird.

"So..." Karl cleared his throat, "did you decide to let him stay?"

"Eventually," Technoblade shrugged, "once we came to an agreement."

Phil bristled, gritting his teeth.

"What was it like living with *The Blade*?" Tubbo asked, noticing Phil's anger and quickly trying to steer things away.

"Boring." Tommy muttered, crossing his arms, "all this guy does is work and sleep and work and sleep and work and sleep. It's *terrible*!"

"You would be afraid of hard work, wouldn't you?" Fundy chimed in.

"Okay fuck you asshole, I'll take your jacket back if that's what you think!" Tommy hissed angrily.

Many people looked over at Fundy, staring at the black sweater.

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?" Quackity questioned.

"I made it which means legally, I can take it back whenever I feel like it." The blond explained.

There was a prolonged silence in the room, however, Tubbo and Fundy were smiling knowingly.

“You *what?*” Puffy asked, turning around from her spot on the floor to look up at him. He gave them all a weird look. Jack and Niki seemed surprised at everyone’s confusion.

“I made it...” He tilted his head, “what’s the big deal?”

“It’s not like- a big deal I guess,” Ranboo began, “we just didn’t know you could *make* things.”

“Sewing is *easy* Ranboob,” Tommy grinned, “I’m like a total pro.”

“Who do you think made the L’Manberg uniforms and flag?” Tubbo questioned.

Many people in the room seemed taken aback by that.

“No fucking way that was you,” Quackity gaped, “no way!”

“*Tubbo!*” Tommy whined, looking upset. He was pouting slightly. “Now they’re gonna want me to make things for them!”

Tubbo grinned, acting innocent as the blond suffered.

And as the room dissolved into chatter, people excitedly asking what he could and couldn’t make and thinking hard on what they wanted, things felt much more lighthearted than they had not very long before.

Exile was over, Tommy was safe with his older brother, and they were casually discussing *sewing* of all things.

It would be okay from there on out.

## **you are coming down with me.**

### Chapter Summary

More bedrock bros :) absolutely nothing could go wrong from here on out

Phil had never known much about his youngest's life on the Dream SMP.

Wilbur was an avid songbird, constantly relaying messages of good tidings and filling Phil in on their day to day lives. His letters were chalkful of personality and charm, and you could always tell who they were written by.

Tommy never wrote, however.

In the letters Phil *did* receive, there'd often be tales of issues they'd run into, but that had been resolved before Wilbur had even found the time to write the letters. More often than not, it was something Tommy had caused, and though Phil had left him at such a young age, it was obvious that his youngest hadn't changed.

Things like *'Tommy fell out of a tree and knocked out a tooth. I used some of the rainy day fund to buy him some ice cream and shut him up, xoxo Wilbur'* or *'You'll be quite happy to know Tommy is not allergic to bee stings, even in large quantities. Love, your middle child.'* were the usual comments and tidbits he'd received on his youngest.

So when he'd joined the Dream SMP years later, the things people had told him didn't seem all that farfetched. He hadn't seen or heard from Tommy in so long that he had no reason to *not* believe the things he heard.

It was, admittedly, disheartening to hear that people hated his boy so much, and he might've retaliated a little too aggressively to the first people he'd asked, bless their souls, but soon enough the evidence was irrefutable.

Everyone around seemed to think his son was some sort of villain. Apparently he'd made a reputation for himself as a selfish little brat with very little empathy for others. Apparently they thought themselves better off without him.

Looking back on it, however, Phil realized he should have fought them on it. He shouldn't have believed them. He should have known better than to just believe that the sweet little boy, *his* little boy that he'd left behind, had somehow become so warped without reason.

It was just so hard *not* to.

When he'd gone up to Tommy after the sixteenth the boy had been so *angry* ; not even towards his father, but just towards the world in general. He was sharp-tongued and rough on the edges, lashing out at everyone around him.

Phil should have known he was just grieving in his own way. Phil should have known no one ever taught him how to cope with loss. Phil should have known Tommy had just lost the only family he'd had.

Still, it had been jarring to see, and so he'd assumed that Tommy just needed time and space; and that was exactly what he'd given the boy, busying himself with his eldest son who was retreating somewhere in the arctic, just barely over twenty but somehow having decided he'd had enough of everything.

The next time he'd heard anything about Tommy, it was news breathlessly delivered by a hoard of his crows that his son had *burnt a man's house down without reason* . Of course, that had to have been a mistake, so he'd fled the arctic searching for answers.

Tubbo apparently had all of them.

If *Tubbo*, the boy who Wilbur had described in letters as Tommy's other half, the boy who was always at Tommy's side, was telling Phil that his youngest had committed an

unprovoked act of arson, that his youngest was selfish and idiotic, well, who was he to disagree? It wasn't as if he knew Tommy better than the boy.

And then things got complicated.

In a swirl of events he could barely keep track of, Phil found himself under house arrest with Tommy in exile, and just like that he'd had his own things to worry about. For god's sake, his eldest was being hunted like an animal by the government. Surely, if Tommy had dug that hole, he could survive laying in it for a bit.

*He almost didn't, though.*

Things had moved pretty fast afterwards, and before he knew it his boys were together again, and he couldn't have been happier. Techno had always felt so excluded from the three because of how badly he feared hurting them, spending most of his time isolated even before they'd left to find answers.

However good things don't last, apparently, and he'd watched Techno come back to the cottage one day; downtrodden and defeated, a lack of a certain bubbly blond at his side.

To put it simply, his eldest had been bitter and hurt, and when he'd told Phil that Tommy had betrayed him for the country that exiled him, well, he couldn't help but be disappointed.

He hadn't really seen Tommy during doomsday, and if he did he'd blocked it out, but he knew he was doing it for the best. Technoblade had told him about what that country had done to Wilbur.

And then that was it, really. His youngest went off, and Phil offered Ranboo a home.

They didn't speak until Techno had delivered the news that Tommy was trying to rid them of their one chance at getting Wilbur back.

Initially, he'd been livid. The thought of Tommy not wanting Wilbur back, of him *actively* trying to keep them from getting his older brother back... well it upset Phil.

But now? After seeing what he'd seen? He knew Tommy had his reasons.

He just... wished there was some way to make up for it.

He'd never been a man to break easily, but he'd always had a soft spot for Wilbur, Techno, and Tommy, and seeing the way they'd treated each other broke his heart.

He'd spent so much time with Techno he supposed he might've gotten used to... his nature; but the truth was that not everyone could handle the way he was, and Tommy was *definitely* not someone who could cope with the blunt and crude actions of his brother.

So Phil had sat and watched as Wilbur; *Wilbur*, hurt his baby brother. Wilbur who had held Tommy as a baby and sang to him, who had insisted on being the one to put Tommy to bed, who had practically *raised* Tommy.

And then Technoblade had followed suit. Techno, who was Tommy's biggest hero, the person who Tommy looked up to the most in the world, had willingly set foot in that pit.

But of course, the biggest culprit of them all was Phil himself.

Tommy had been through *so* much, and despite being his father, Phil hadn't known any of it. Tommy and Wilbur had *suffered* while he'd tried to help Techno and tried to keep them safe. He had raised two of the people who had hurt Tommy the most.

So by then, he could only sit and watch as things somehow managed to get worse every time, hoping and *praying* to anyone that it would finally be over; begging for it to finish so he could apologize over and over and over.

More than anything, though, he just wanted to hold his boy and tell him it was okay. He wanted to go back and promise to never leave, to plant a kiss on his forehead and promise to keep him safe.

He never wanted to see Tommy hurt again,

But then, of course, that wretched screen started back up again.

**Techno appeared on screen, silently sitting in the armchair adjacent to the couch and watching Tommy sleep. His hair was wet and he had a change of clothes, but he still looked just as tired as he had the moment he'd arrived home.**

**His eyes flicked over to the fireplace as a loud pop resounded throughout the room before going back to his little brother.**

**Tommy was coated in sweat, a wet towel on his brow. His hair was stringy and matted with blood, cheeks sunken in and lips pulled into a deep frown, even in his sleep. His arms were wrapped securely, slathered in different ointments and creams, and his foot was propped up on a stack of pillows, bandaged loosely.**

*It's about time...* Puffy thought quietly. She'd been tired of watching Tommy hobble around on his untreated wounds, no doubt making them worse.

Tommy frowned. He didn't remember looking that pathetic, and he also didn't remember it being that serious.

**He looked so... small; shivering and curled in on himself.**

**It was dark out by then, frigid winds blowing harshly on the door. Technoblade had lit more lanterns than usual, he wasn't quite sure why.**



**Tommy let out a low keel, shifting slightly, and the elder's ear twitched almost instantly, gazing intently.**

Phil watched, eyes wide.

**The blond murmured, rolling over onto his side; or.... attempting to. He let out a gasp of pain, groaning and slowly coming into awareness. He peeled his eyes open, mouth dry.**

**“Welcome back to the land of the living, Theseus.” Techno muttered, not moving.**

**Tommy blinked blearily, adjusting to the light and looking to his left. For a moment he only stared at the piglin hybrid, eyes half-lidded.**

**Then, he realized exactly where he was.**

**“Oh, what the *fuck*?” He whispered, voice hoarse.**

Sam winced at the raspy words, sympathizing with how raw and red Tommy's throat probably was.

**The man across from him gave a tiny head tilt, and his eyes grew wide, tensing and quickly trying to sit up. He only made it about halfway before crying out in pain, lying back down as he held his side.**

Karl sucked in a breath, rubbing anxiously at his own side as though he could feel it himself.

**“I wouldn't move too much if I were you.” Technoblade hummed, looking the boy up and down, “You're not in a very good way right now, Tommy.”**

Tommy narrowed his eyes, carefully twisting so that he could look at the man.

**“Well I was doing just fine before *you* got your big oaf hands on me,” he hissed, “So what the fuck did you do to me?”**

“At least you know he’s still Tommy.” Fundy muttered.

Technoblade sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. **“You weren’t fine, Tommy. You were only standing ‘cause you were hopped up on gapples. *My* gapples, to be specific.”**

Almost instantly, Tommy backpedaled, grinning sheepishly. **“Well let’s not point fingers here, Technoblade!”** He laughed, sweating bullets, **“To each their own, amirite?”**

Quackity shook his head, bemused.

The latter didn’t bother responding, only staring quietly. Tommy squirmed under his gaze, unsure of what was going through his mind. An awkward silence hung over them, and the blond’s eyes flicked over to the corner of the cottage where there were four hooks lined up by the front door.

**“What the hell were you thinking, Tommy?”** Technoblade said finally, sighing quietly, **“Walking on your foot when it’s like that? Walking in the *snow* like that? You had a *hole* in your shoulder and three broken ribs- not to mention the- the mess that your arms were...”** He paused, pursing his lips, **“What were you even *doing* out here?”**

“Glad you’re bringing that up.” Puffy commented, eyes never leaving the screen.

“Why wouldn’t I?” Techno asked, tilting his head.

“Well... I don’t know I just- I’m used to watching him get treated like crap.” She replied, “I guess I just expected the worst from you.”

“Thanks.” He said dryly.

**Tommy’s shoulders hiked up defensively, and he sniffled; his nose was stuffed. “I don’t have to tell you shit, bitch.” He scowled.**

**“You’re living in my house,” the elder raised a brow, “you *burrowed* under my house like a raccoon!”**

**The blond sucked in a breath, “So you found that, huh?”**

**Technoblade gave him an unimpressed stare, leaning forward in his chair and pressing his hands together. “You can’t just stay here, Tommy, not if we aren’t working together.”**

Phil turned his head, eyes narrowed.

“You find your little brother in that condition and you- you want to *kick him out*?” He demanded incredulously.

“It’s not like that,” Techno shook his head, “I just- I didn’t want to let him think he could walk all over me! I can’t just let people stick around for *free*!”

“He’s your *brother*!” Phil shot back, eyes wide.

“We’ve already had this discussion,” The piglin muttered, worn down, “I’m not doing this again.”

Phil sighed quietly, putting his head in his hands.

Tommy squirmed uncomfortably.

**Tommy's brow furrowed, and he tilted his head. "...Working together?"**

**"Mhm," Techno nodded, "see, if we were allies, if we had a mutual goal we were workin' towards, then I don't see why we couldn't sit and discuss living arrangements."**

"Wow," Quackity sang, "that's not at all a dick move!"

"To be fair, I didn't know what he'd just gone through." Technoblade pointed out.

"You did know he didn't have anywhere else to go, though," Sam added, "didn't you?"

It wasn't a question.

**The younger was quiet for a moment, as if digesting the words. The fire crackling and the slight rattle in his lungs were the only sounds in the cottage.**

**"Wait," he shook his head, "wait, no." He frowned, "you want me to be allies with you? *You?* The guy who- who blew up my home? Who *killed* Tubbo?"**

Tubbo cringed.

"You're always so... *pushy* about that..." He muttered. Ranboo narrowed his eyes as Tommy scrunched up his face.

“Someone has to be.” The enderman hybrid commented, looking away. Tubbo cocked his head, confused.

**“That was months ago!” Techno rolled his eyes, a ghost of a smile on his face.**

*Sick bastard...* Quackity thought to himself.

**Tommy looked upon him with disgust, lips curled into a deep frown. Images of colourful flashes and bursts of colour were forever burned into his mind.**

**“I can’t,” he said finally, “I can’t align myself with L’Manbergs enemy.”**

Phil frowned, heart twisting.

Had the country really meant that much?

**“L’Manberg’s enemy,” Technoblade repeated, “not yours.”**

**Tommy stiffened.**

**“ *You* aren’t L’manberg, Tommy. You aren’t even a part of it anymore.”**

“Alright asshole, that was a low blow.” Sapnap hissed, turning to glare at the man.

“I didn’t say anything that wasn’t true.” Techno shrugged.

And oh how he loathed that statement. How he *abhorred* even the slightest implications of it. He wanted to stand tall and say with his chest that he *was* L'Manberg. He wanted to say at full volume, voice carrying across the room that he had no idea where the country ended and he began, that every time it had blown up he had *felt* it in his chest. He wanted to explain that he was his and Wilbur's country.

But he didn't know how to.

"I-

"What have they actually *done* for you, Tommy?" Technoblade pressed, staring intently, "Other than take from you?"

Tommy furrowed his brow, frowning.

"They took everything from you! After you gave them everything they have!" The piglin hybrid seemed much more awake than he was previously, movements more animated and much more intrigued.

"I gave up the discs and two of my lives for them..." Tommy mumbled quietly, "I gave up *Wilbur* for them."

Niki frowned, making a face.

"You did give a lot, Tommy." Puffy hummed, turning her head back to look up at him. He scowled, cheeks turning red.

"I fuckin *know* I did..." He muttered.

"It's pretty admirable, actually." George nodded.

Tommy made a choked noise before quickly clearing his throat. He chose to ignore the comment.

**Technoblade reacted if just for a moment, eyes widening slightly at the mention of his twin before he was already going back to his persuasive speech.**

**“And what do they do the moment you aren’t convenient for them? The moment they can’t *use* you?” He gave Tommy a knowing look, “They exile you. They kick you to the curb.”**

Tommy pursed his lips. The statement still stung.

Probably because a part of it was true.

**Tommy was very quiet, lips pursed. His eyes trained on the floorboards, fists clenched at his side.**

**“No,” he shook his head, gritting his teeth, “Tubbo wouldn’t like this. He- He wouldn’t like it.”**

There it was again; the thing that grounded him, the *person* that grounded him. Tommy wasn’t driven by his own moral compass, he was driven by his loved ones. If Tubbo said something was right, it was right. If Wilbur said something was wrong, it was wrong.

Tommy let his own heart guide him, but the issue was that his heart just followed who it loved.

*Obviously*, Tubbo could never be in the wrong, right?

Everyone around them was starting to realize to what degree Tommy depended on Tubbo.

It was concerning, to say the least. For someone so headstrong it was just... *strange* to see him completely blinded by his dependency.

**Technoblade paused, frowning.**

**“Okay seriously,” he began, “what is it with you and Tubbo?”**

Ranboo shifted uncomfortably, extremely aware of the fact that he was between the two deathly silent boys.

**“He’s my friend, dickhead!” Tommy glared, baring his teeth. “My best friend!”**

**The elder nodded wordlessly, sitting back in his chair. The wind continued to howl outside, and the candles were burning low.**

**“So he’s your best friend,” Techno began, “but are you *his* best friend?”**

Tubbo went completely rigid, and Ranboo could almost feel the temperature in the room drop.

A couple people in the room looked almost as perturbed, but Tommy was scowling at the ground, tips of his ears red.

**Tommy all but froze, eyes going wide. He looked back down at the floor, swallowing a lump in his throat.**



**“Does Tubbo care about you as much as you care about him?” Technoblade pressed further, face pensive.**

Puffy opened her mouth, ready to comment on everything so very wrong with that sentence, but Tubbo beat her to the punch.

“I’m so tired of everyone doing that...” He muttered, shoulders tense and fists clenched. Ranboo looked over worriedly at Tommy, confused.

Tubbo stood, turning around to face Technoblade.

“I could handle it when Wilbur did it,” he laughed bitterly, “and I could cope with Dream doing the same...” he stared into the man’s eyes, “but even *I* can only take so much.”

Techno furrowed a brow, as did many others in the room.

Ranboo had noticed the boy had been scowling at the occasional comment, that he was growing more tense over time, but he wasn’t exactly sure over what.

“Who are you to tell Tommy how I feel about him?” He demanded, “*Why* does my name keep getting thrown around like that? Do I- does everyone have that little respect for me?”

They were completely quiet, stunned by the outburst.

Tubbo was so quick to repress things; to internalize them and let them fester, that it almost felt surreal to see it all come bubbling over.

“Technoblade, I was *president* of L’Manberg,” he began, voice dangerously low, “I gave the command for your execution and I would *gladly* do it again for what you did on Doomsday.”

The man in question blinked, slightly taken aback. He readied himself for a rebuttal, but Tubbo didn't seem quite done.

"This entire time I've sat here and listened to the way everyone tells Tommy *Tubbo thinks this* or *Tubbo thinks that* but not a single one of you has a *clue* what I'm thinking!" He swiveled, eyeing everyone, "Why is everyone always trying to pit us against each other!?"

There was silence, no one knowing what to say.

Tubbo turned, looking over at the wide-eyed face of his best friend.

"You *are* my best friend, Tommy," he said, smiling sadly, "I never want you to feel like you aren't."

Tommy didn't know what to say, only nodding quietly as he continued to stare.

Puffy tried hard to hide her smirk.

**The blond teen took a deep breath, but didn't answer. His older brother watched curiously.**

**After what felt like hours, Tommy finally broke the silence, sighing shakily. He looked up, eyes narrowed at Technoblade.**

**"I will work with you," he muttered, "you will help me get my discs back and I will help you do whatever it is you do, but I will *not* do anything that would upset Tubbo. I will *not* harm L'Manberg in any way." His voice was firm and unwavering, similar to his stare.**

Quackity's lip curled in disgust. He'd never tried to hide his distaste for *The Blade*, but knowing that Technoblade of all people had been the one Tommy had found solace in after

his exile... well... it worried him.

Even if he was being completely unbiased, what sort of tact did the man have for dealing with someone so *fragile*?

**For a long moment, Technoblade only stared back.**

**“Fine,” he sighed, “that’ll work. I can work with that.”**

**“*But*,” Tommy interrupted, a bit of his liveliness back, “this is a *partnership* founded on mutual agreement. None of that- that friend stuff, yeah?”**

Phil glowered at both of them.

“Course none of that friend stuff,” he hissed, “you’re *brothers!*”

Tommy scowled, looking away. How could he forget? His dad kept bringing it up every two minutes.

**“Trust me,” Technoblade snorted, rolling his eyes, “that’s not even an option.”**

**Both of them seemed satisfied, postures relaxing slightly. The candles were almost at the end of their wicks and the fire was burning down.**

**Techno stood to go fetch more wax candles.**

**“Why are my arms so sore?” Tommy hummed quietly, wincing as he tried to raise them, “and heavy?”**

**“You have the End Dragon of fevers,” Technoblade replied from somewhere on the other side of the room, rummaging through chests, “like, seriously.”**

Puffy frowned sympathetically.

**“Oh,” The blond whispered, nodding softly. He went to lay back down. “Cool.”**

**“Not cool,” Techno grunted, standing and making his way back over, “it’s gonna be a pain to take care of.”**

Ranboo didn’t like the way the man spoke. It was one thing to be a sort of jaded character in general, but to act like so around someone who had just been so severely abused both psychologically and physically... it didn’t sit perfectly right with him.

Technoblade’s discontent was bound to make Tommy uneasy.

**He placed the replacement candles all around. “we’re gonna have to keep you on bedrest for a couple days,” he leant over, lighting a match, “which means you’ll be useless for the time being,” he slowly began to light the candles, “and you probably shouldn’t have solids so I’ll have to ignore the food I’ve already made to make you soup...”**

**He stood, blowing out the match and wiping his hands off. “But if you’re willing to make up for that I-”**

**Technoblade paused, looking over at the couch. Tommy was sound asleep, chest rising and falling slowly.**

Niki felt a pang in her chest, glaring and trying to ignore it. Seeing him sleep so peacefully was reminiscent of the early L’Manberg days where she’d work the night watch, always

watching over her boys.

**The piglin hybrid huffed, rolling his eyes.**

**“You’re lucky you’re my brother...” He muttered, voice quiet.**

**Without another word he left the room, the screen going dark.**

Tommy’s cheeks went red, eyes widening.

Technoblade immediately frowned, turning his head and squirming in his seat.

Phil however, was smiling softly at where his sons had been on the screen, eyes warm.

**When Tommy awoke, it was to sunlight filtering in through the windows. Dust was visible floating through the air, and the drapes were drawn open so as to brighten the place up. The fireplace was quiet, nothing but smoldering ash, and all the candles had been blown out.**

“That’s uncomfortably cozy.” Jack muttered.

**Technoblade was nowhere to be found, but there was a new wet rag on his forehead and a glass of water on the table beside him. He frowned, wincing slightly as he maneuvered into a bit more of an elevated position.**

**He thirstily downed the glass in one go, setting it back down where he’d grabbed it from and leaving the rag beside it.**

**“I’ll grab you some more,” a voice came from behind him. Tommy nearly jumped out of his skin, screaming and falling back slightly.**

A couple of them laughed at that, Tommy glaring angrily.

**Technoblade rounded the couch, a bowl of soup in his hands and a smirk poking at the edges of his mouth. He placed the bowl down, grabbing the glass and shaking it slightly to get Tommy’s attention.**

**“Excessive amounts of fluid and rest are how we’re going to nip this fever in the bud so that I don’t have to do,” he gestured vaguely, “*this* for any longer than necessary.”**

“Your host has such excellent manners.” Sam commented dryly.

**Tommy smirked at him, cocking a brow.**

**“You’re a bit like my maid, yeah?” He grinned, a bit of light returning to his eyes, “My *bitch* perhaps?”**

Tubbo grinned at the screen, stifling a laugh.

**Technoblade was silent for a long moment, and Tommy watched with an excited expression. Eventually, the man turned on his heel, wordlessly leaving the room, and Tommy erupted into laughter; half of it being spent clutching his side in pain.**

**His pained laughter soon dissolved into coughs, however, and through his hacking, he heard a very distinct “*L!*” from down the hall.**

Many of them couldn’t help but smile, Tommy’s laughter was infectious.

Phil's chest bloomed with warmth.

**And as his older brother returned with another glass of water and a healing potion, Tommy, for the first time in what felt like forever, felt safe.**

Technoblade glared at the screen, an uncomfortable feeling brewing within him.

**The screen switched to a snowy plain, two small figures trudging across it slowly. The sun was high in the bright blue sky, not a cloud in sight, and its light reflected off the snow's surface, practically blinding them all.**

"The Arctic is so ugly." Karl noted, tilting his head.

"The Arctic is *fine*." Technoblade insisted through grit teeth.

**"Pick up the pace!" Techno called back, his large boots creating huge footprints in the deep snow.**

**"I'm going as fast as I can, you prick!" Tommy angrily chirped back. He was wrapped in a large fleece cloak almost twice his size as he carefully hopped in the snow, following Technoblade's exact footsteps. "I hate the cold!" He whined loudly, throwing his head back.**

It was a comical sight, really, and a couple of them couldn't help but grin.

Tommy looked like a chick following its parent.

**"Imagine how I feel..." Techno muttered, rolling his eyes. He allowed himself a quick moment of respite, fantasizing about the pools of lava and hot coals in the nether.**

*“That I can agree with,”* Sapnap nodded, *“overworldies are so whiny about temperature.”*

Techno let out an amused huff and Ranboo grinned slightly.

*“Oh fuck you,”* Tommy rolled his eyes, *“just cause I don’t take lava baths doesn’t mean I’m not allowed to be cold, Sapnap!”*

**Before he’d even realized it they’d reached the side of the mountain, and Tommy was just a couple steps behind him, unbalanced as always. He waited a moment for the blond to reach his side before he leant over, brushing some snow off of the mountain’s stone wall.**

**“I haven’t even told Phil about this yet.”** He grinned, and Tommy gave him a questionable look. **“Go on,”** he nodded towards the barely visible button, **“press it.”**

*“Do not press it.”* George shook his head.

Phil frowned, knowing exactly what was behind that wall.

**Tommy hesitated, reaching out but falling short. He looked back at his older brother wearily.**

**“If I was going to kill you I would have done it already.”** Techno sighed, shaking his head.

**With all the courage he could muster, Tommy nodded, taking a deep breath and pressing the button.**

**Almost instantly, the huge mountain wall before him began to lower, revealing a secret room that was dug into the stone. Tommy squinted at the walls, perplexed by their colour and pattern. There was something he couldn’t quite place.**



Niki squinted at the screen. “Are those...?”

*“Holy shit...”*

**His eyes widened.**

***Oh.***

**All at once he let out a shrill scream, nearly falling back as he stepped away. The huge mouth of the room was completely open, exposing the walls lined head to toe and front to back with wither skulls.**

“No fucking way!” Quackity cried out, jaw-dropping.

“That can’t be real... Those have to be fake...” Niki’s eyes were wide.

*No one should have that much power.*

**Technoblade only laughed, throwing his arms out in the air excitedly.**

**“Welcome home, Theseus!” He cried, standing before the secret base.**

**Without another word the older brother turned tail, stalking inside the room like a kid on Christmas. Tommy forced himself to swallow his shock and horror, scurrying after the man.**

**“I thought you were retired!” The blond cried out, looking the place up and down. He kept to the middle, weary of the skulls.**

**“I was,” Techno hummed, checking his chests over, “but Quackity and his goons requested my return.”**

“We aren’t his goons, asshole!” Fundy hissed, tail spiking up.

“And absolutely *no one* asked for you to come back,” Quackity glared, “we just wanted you to face, hm, I don’t know... some fucking consequences for your actions!”

“Have you guys not realized that L’Manberg was an active issue on this server?” Technoblade demanded, “Has me finally ridding you all of it not maybe proved my point that you’re all so much better off without it?”

Quackity swallowed thickly, looking over at his fiances and best friend. The destruction of L’Manberg had sent him far away, and them even further. He didn’t even *know* what they were doing because they hadn’t bothered to tell him. He’d been miserable since Doomsday.

Tubbo frowned, gaze flicking towards his husband. He thought back to his son and couldn’t help but wonder if things *were* better because of Doomsday.

Sam paused for a moment, giving it genuine thought. The hotel had come from Doomsday and had been good business, but to be honest, he’d never really been affected.

“Oh *fuck you!*” Tommy hissed, “Don’t act like that was anything other than you throwing a big bitch fit 'cause they tried to execute you! L’Manberg wasn’t hurting anybody!”

“That’s what *you* think,” Technoblade pressed, “because you’re blind to it; of course you are! You created it!”

“No,” The blond shook his head, “you took the last thing I had left just to prove you were better than everyone. *You’re* the one who’s blind, Technoblade.”

“I-”

“We are *not* doing this right now,” Phil interjected, eyes narrowed and arms crossed, “I don’t need my one chance at watching you two get along being ruined by your fighting!”

“But-”

“*No.*” Phil hissed, tone commanding and stern.

Almost instantly the two quieted, sulking silently.

Tommy glared at the floor angrily.

He didn’t know why he still bothered listening to Phil so readily. He didn’t know why he always did what Phil said, after everything the man had done.

But his dad looked genuinely happy, watching the memories of the Arctic, and if he wanted to pretend for just a *moment* that they were okay, Tommy would let him have that.

God knows he wished someone would have done the same for him.

**Tommy gave his brother a nervous glance, swallowing thickly. He shrank back from the walls, spinning in a circle slowly.**

**“Just what exactly do you plan to... to *do* with all of these?” He whispered, eyes wide.**

“Oh, you know, just ruin everyone’s lives.” Fundy hummed.

**Technoblade shut the bottom left chest on the right wall, turning around to look at the boy. “Oh, you know... Minor terrorism, general acts of violence, the usual.” He shrugged.**

“I don’t think that many skulls equate to *minor* terrorism...” Ranboo muttered.

“It’s a spectrum.” Technoblade replied curtly.

**Tommy paused for a moment, eyeing his brother up and down, before an inkling of a grin appeared on his face.**

Not many of them were expecting that, and for some reason, it was almost... *comforting* to see even just a bit of the annoying Tommy they knew so well come back.

It should have been aggravating, really. They should have been upset that he’d make that stupid face, but they couldn’t bring themselves to feel it.

**“You know, Technoblade,” he began, “I happen to be quite the fan of minor terrorism.”**

“Can’t deny that I suppose.” Tubbo mumbled, thinking back to how Tommy had been when he’d first joined.

Tommy laughed.

**“Well now, Tommy, that’s just what I like to hear.” Technoblade smirked.**

**The screen faded to black.**

For a moment, they were all quiet.

And then;

“So you *knew* he had all those skulls and did nothing?” Niki asked, brow furrowed.

Tommy blinked, as if he hadn’t been expecting it. “Uh...”

“I’m not even mad,” Karl shook his head, grinning, “I just think it’s hilarious that you actually saw that loaded of an arsenal and believed him when he said *minor* terrorism.”

Instantly, the blond’s face heated up.

Niki looked perturbed by the subject change. She opened her mouth to divert attention back to what she’d been saying, but was interrupted by a shrill cry.

“*Shut up!*” Tommy yelled loudly, holding his hands over his ears to hide the red blushing tinge, “What do you know, hm? *Oh I’m Karl Jacobs I think I’m soooooo funny,*” he mocked, “Well you’re *not!* You’re a pussy and a loser!”

“I too, see enough wither skulls to decimate our *entire* server and think ‘Oh boy, can’t wait to do some petty crime’!” Jack chirped, face completely monotone.

For a moment the room was completely silent, and then Quackity erupted into hysterics as Tommy dissolved into angry threats and curses.

“Die.” The blond said, eyes wide and staring into the man’s soul, “Actually jump off of a cliff and *die*.”

The people around him continued to laugh, mocking him and poking fun at him. Tubbo and Ranboo watched, amused as the people in the row behind them continued to make their little jokes and jibes.

Phil smiled to himself, making eye contact with Sam across the room, who also seemed content with just listening to everyone else have fun.

Things were finally looking up.

## using you

### Chapter Summary

bedrock bros.

trigger warnings: blood, panic attacks, intrusive thoughts

Technoblade had never been good with empathy.

Even during times like when Phil was crying to sleep across the campfire from him, he found it hard to *really* care.

Sure, he felt bad, and yeah, he wanted his father to stop crying, but not as much as he wanted to stay in his sleeping bag.

Perhaps it wasn't exactly that he couldn't empathize with people, but more so that he put himself first and foremost on every occasion. If he had the energy, maybe he'd be more open to giving someone advice or doting on them. If he was tired, though; he'd probably dismiss them without batting an eye.

It wasn't that he *wanted* to be like that, but he couldn't really help it either, and had never tried to work on it.

But seeing himself up on that screen, watching moments he'd much rather keep to himself be broadcasted to everyone, he thought he might've truly felt empathetic towards someone for the first time; and that person was Tommy.

He'd never really had shared experiences growing up. He didn't know how to properly understand others' emotions or how to put himself in others' shoes. It was just... not something he was able to do.

Knowing Tommy knew *exactly* how he felt, however, put things in perspective.

Admittedly, he probably should have felt more bad for the kid because of the terrible abuse and manipulation he'd suffered, but he just wasn't built like that. What Technoblade *did* find himself feeling bad for, was the fact that Tommy had to sit there and have his biggest weaknesses shown to such a large audience.

It had only been a select few moments for Technoblade so far, but he was extremely aware of the fact that he did *not* want certain moments visible to the public. He was the Blood God! He was ruthless! They weren't supposed to see his eyes crease and frown soften at the sight of his little brother or the mention of his twin.

That wasn't... that wasn't supposed to happen.

And more than anything, these people didn't *get* him. They seemed to be angry at him constantly, always scrutinizing his actions and acting like he was some sort of brute. He wasn't. It wasn't his fault that they couldn't see it from his side. It wasn't his fault that even his own father seemed to be upset with him.

Phil had barely spoken to him since the pit, and it left him feeling confused and troubled. His father had never genuinely been upset with him like that. It didn't make sense. *Maybe*, after watching it back he could see that he'd taken it a bit too far, but Phil knew more than anyone that he often couldn't control himself.

It was like everyone was out to get him, and though he wasn't unfamiliar with the sentiment, it still didn't feel fantastic.

Still, Technoblade didn't want these things visible to everyone. He actually actively loathed the idea, knowing there was worse to come and that this God that Tommy had somehow befriended could choose to show *anything* at any given time.



The worst part was that he really had gotten soft for the kid for a while. He'd really thought that he and Tommy could have had something *real* like actual brothers did, but... well... the kid had to go back to the very people that hurt him.

Techno didn't even know why he'd been surprised, didn't even know why he *let* himself be taken off guard. Tommy was so clearly a lost cause he didn't understand why he'd even bothered in the first place, but for some reason, it had *hurt*.

He wouldn't be making that mistake again. He wasn't some pushover. He wasn't going to give Tommy another chance. Brother or not, a betrayal was not a word Technoblade used lightly, and his younger brother would have to live that out.

So, yeah, when he watched Dream tower over Tommy and *hurt* him, it made his stomach do a couple flips, but that was a given. They were family; he'd be a monster if he didn't feel *anything* watching Tommy get pushed around like that. And yeah, when Tommy laid down in the dirt and closed his eyes like each individual divot in the ground had been molded to cradle his body it made his skin crawl, but any normal being would have that reaction.

No matter what he saw, he wouldn't let Tommy come crawling back again. He wouldn't let himself get close to someone who had hurt him.

He looked over to where the screen had changed scenes.

**“We seriously need to deal with your hair.”**

**Tommy paused, looking up from his spot on the hardwood floors. He was cross-legged with his back against the couch, dressed in a set of white cloth clothing and with his regular attire in his lap. He had a threaded needle in between his lips and his brows scrunched up tight as he scrutinized a hole in his red tee.**

“Awww,” Fundy cooed, “look at you sewing away!”

“Shut the fuck up,” Tommy replied, not taking his eyes off the screen.

“It’s weird seeing you in anything other than your uniform or your shirt.” Tubbo noted.

**Technoblade was in the doorway, staring at him, unimpressed.**

**“Fuck roes rhat mean?” Tommy wrinkled his nose, needle still in his mouth. His hair was matted with blood and grime, dirtied by months of unsanitary and unsafe living conditions, and tied back into a short ponytail, his bangs pinned back by a large clip Techno had found in his junk drawer.**

**“You probably have fleas or something,” Techno replied, narrowing his eyes, “and you’re using *my* pillowcases and cloaks. It’s gross.”**

A couple of them snorted.

**“I personally don’t find it gross at all...” Tommy muttered, spitting out the needle and sticking it in the pin cushion beside him.**

**“You wouldn’t know gross if it hit you in the face,” Techno rolled his eyes, taking a step forward and throwing a towel at the boy, “go wash off and then I’ll cut out all the mats and unsavable bits.”**

“You’re cutting his hair?” Puffy asked.

The truth was that Technoblade hadn’t exactly *trusted* Tommy with sharp things at the beginning, especially around himself.

“He would have done an awful job,” Techno shrugged, “I was saving my eyes from that.” It was a weak excuse and he probably could have done better if given just a few more seconds.

“Oh fuck you!”

**The blond complained, but complied all the same. He snatched the towel from the floor, stalking off and muttering quietly to himself as Techno watched him go.**

**Ten minutes later Tommy appeared in the doorway, hair dripping wet and barefoot, dressed in the same white cloth. He was hugging himself tightly, teeth chattering.**

A pang went through Phil’s heart at the sigh, and he almost doubled over. He could remember back in their old home near the woods when Tommy was just a toddler, standing and shivering the exact same way in the doorway, wrapped tightly in a bright red towel Phil had bought for him.

**Techno cocked a brow, motioning over to the left.**

**“Come sit by the fire before you catch another cold.” He instructed, making the first move and sitting by the hearth.**

**Tommy seemed too cold to argue, merely padding over to the fire and sitting with his back turned to his brother and himself facing the fire. He seemed to relax slightly at the warmth, but continued to shiver all the same.**

Niki frowned.

She wasn’t sure why someone other than her cutting Tommy’s hair made her so upset, but she tried to ignore it.

**Wordlessly, Technoblade began to snip away at the matted hair, pulling bloody chunks from Tommy’s scalp and trying not to make faces.**

“Okay, *maybe* it was a little gross...” Tommy muttered.

Ranboo let out a loud laugh.

**It was quiet as he worked, Tommy’s breathing shallow as if he was almost afraid. Techno frowned, pausing in his movements to flick his gaze over to the boy’s face.**

**“Remember how much you hated baths when we were kids?” He all but whispered, voice gruff but somewhat soft.**

“That does not surprise me.” Sam said.

“Piss off.”

**Tommy smirked slightly, “Yeah, I completely swore them off.”**

**The fire cracked and popped in front of them as the cold winter air blew harshly on the windows outside in the night.**

**“Phil had to get me to convince you that they were ‘manly’ and ‘mature’.” A small smile tugged at the corner of Techno’s mouth.**

It was... weird for the rest of them. No matter how many times they heard it, no matter how many times they saw it, none of them could truly picture Tommy growing up alongside Technoblade. None of them could really imagine Technoblade being a brother to Tommy.

Phil was completely silent.

**They were both quiet for a moment, though much unlike past times, it was a comfortable silence.**

**“I would have done anything you told me to,” Tommy murmured, uncharacteristically quiet, “I wanted to be just like you.”**

Tommy’s cheeks went bright red.

**Techno’s face softened just slightly. “I know.” He hummed, “You wouldn’t even call me Techno, it always had to be Technoblade in full.”**

**“Cause you were the fuckin *Blade*, man,” Tommy yawned, rubbing at his eyes, “you were so cool...”**

“Oh boys...” Phil muttered, eyes wide.

Both of his sons looked mortified.

**The elder sibling smirked, snipping away at more hair, “I was just a kid like you, Tommy.”**

**“Sure,” the blond shrugged, “but you were still older than me. In my mind, you were basically an adult.”**

Tommy could remember it. Like how younger children saw sixth graders and thought they were the equivalent of seventeen-year-olds who did hard drugs at skateparks on Wednesday nights. He’d always thought Technoblade was untouchable.

**“And now?”**

**“Well now you actually are,” Tommy said, rubbing at his eyes again, “you- you’re an *adult* and you’re tall and strong and you live on your own!” He thought of all the things Techno owned, of all the treasures and potions and goods. It was remarkable, and it had always just seemed more fantasy than reality.**

**“I live with you, don’t I?” Technoblade asked very quietly, still working away.**

Technoblade had half a mind to unsheathe his sword and plunge it into his throat.

Everyone else seemed completely mesmerized by the unusually tender moment, but both him and Tommy were convinced it was the worst thing that had ever happened to them.

**Tommy paused for a second, eyes widening just a fraction before he smiled. “Yeah...” He nodded, “you do.”**

Tears welled in Phil’s eyes as he looked over at his eldest.

“Tech...” He reached out a hand, grabbing Techno’s own.

And despite that ever since his father had decided he was mad at him Technoblade had been actively seeking out Phil’s respite, he found that the humiliation of it all was too much to bear, and he pulled away.

Phil frowned.

Everyone else was floored by the display of affection and vulnerability in the moment, even Fundy didn’t make a sarcastic comment about it.

**For a moment they were both very silent, and Tommy had stopped shivering, sitting completely still and quiet. The house still smelled of pine and detergent, and the lanterns glowed softly in corners where the fireplace’s light couldn’t reach.**

**“I mean technically you live with me, though,” Techno added, “it is all my stuff. You’re just a little raccoon. A little leech.”**

“Hmmm,” Puffy tilted her head, “I’ve never heard that comparison before.”

“Keep it that way.” Tommy snarked.

**“I’m not a fuckin *leech* !” Tommy scoffed, affronted, “fuck you man!”**

The elder merely smirked.

**They continued making amble conversation after that, Tommy seemingly less anxious and more talkative like usual.**

**It wasn’t until Technoblade was halfway through a story about one of his and Phil’s adventures that he noticed Tommy was half asleep. The blond’s head was lolling, dipping, and snapping back up at the last second as he tried to keep his eyes open.**

Ranboo didn’t know why that of all things made his chest tighten but it *did*.

Tommy groaned loudly, putting his head in his hands.

Jack stifled a laugh.

**The piglin hybrid let out an amused huff, watching for a moment as Tommy tried so desperately to keep himself awake.**

“Sadist.” Quackity muttered, though it was much more lighthearted than other gibes normally were.

**Technoblade put a hand on the younger’s shoulder, smirking, “I’ll finish another time, Tommy.”**

**“What?” Almost instantly, Tommy’s eyes shot open, and he seemed a bit dazed, “no man! You can keep goi-”**

**“You’re practically sleeping, Tommy.” Techno pointed out, placing the scissors down on the floor. He groaned, standing up and brushing some of the hair off of his pants. He reached out a hand for the boy to grab.**

Tubbo snorted, smiling up at the screen. Tommy had a tendency to stay awake until he physically could no longer, as though he was afraid of telling anyone he was tired.

**Tommy lazily stared up, extending his arm.**

**The elder hefted him up, and he stumbled, wincing and leaning into Techno’s chest.**

**“Sorry...” He muttered, putting more weight on his other leg, “forgot about my foot.”**

Phil took a shaky breath.

**“It’s fine, Tommy.” Technoblade assured, letting him go. “Just make sure to get some sleep, yeah? We’ve got a busy day tomorrow.”**

**The younger hummed, nodding his head. The fire had grown smaller over time, the embers glowing. Techno moved to put it out, kneeling.**



**“I know,” Tommy said, “gonna get some dogs n shit.”**

**Technoblade couldn't help the small grin on his face at that as he stood. “Yeah....” He made his way across the room towards the doorway, waiting until Tommy was making his way down into the basement, “goodnight, Tommy.”**

**“Night Techno.”**

**He switched the lights off and the screen went dark.**

For a moment, they were quiet.

“Well, that was uncomfortably heartwarming.” Ranboo quipped.

“Yeah but then you look at these two in real time and lose all hope.” Fundy muttered.

Phil glared, pursing his lips and looking over at Techno and then at Tommy. He wasn't sure what to say, but he *did* know the joy of seeing his boys getting along was nearly overwhelming.

He didn't want to think of the fact that things hadn't stayed as perfect as they were in that memory. He didn't want to think of the fact that he could have actually had something of substance. He didn't want to think of the fact that he could have had some semblance of a family once again.

He remembered how devastated Technoblade had been when he'd returned from L'Manberg without Tommy by his side, and all he could wonder was *Where had it all gone wrong?*

Phil saw the gentle way his eldest had carded his hands through Tommy's hair. He'd noticed how delicate Technoblade had been, and he'd picked up on how his youngest had felt *safe*.

He felt sick.

**The screen switched to a muddy and wet terrain, melted snow dripping from the trees. The sun was high in the blue sky, and the clouds were sparse.**

**Tommy groaned, grinning wide and stepping out of the snow into the mud. Large boots that had barely been worn were buckled tightly to his feet, looking much too big.**

“Hand me downs,” Fundy nodded along, “I know them all too well.”

“Stop acting so hard done by.” Phil laughed, rolling his eyes.

**“You know what that smell is, Technoblade?” He asked, basking in the sunlight and stretching his arms out wide.**

**The man in question looked back from where he was, slightly ahead of the blond, and cocked a brow.**

**“Fresh air!” Tommy exclaimed, laughing loudly.**

Quackity grinned at the open display of joy. It was comforting to see Tommy doing better after everything that exile had been.

**Technoblade frowned slightly, looking over at the snow biome. “There was plenty of fresh air back at home, Tommy.” He sighed.**

**The young boy smirked, jumping up and into a large puddle of murky water in the grass. “Not like that!” He made a face, “*This* is where it’s at!” He spun in a circle, “The mud! The bugs! The grass! Snow is for pussies.”**

“You used to eat mud.” Phil piped up from the back.

“And Wilbur used to eat sand.” Techno added, unperturbed.

“What the hell is wrong with your family?” Jack asked, looking slightly disturbed.

**“It is good for hiding the bodies of annoyin' children, though.” Techno hummed thoughtfully.**

A couple of them laughed.

**“Yeah,” Tommy snorted, rolling his eyes and smirking unbelievably, “you’d know.”**

**Techno didn’t reply, beginning to walk further away. Tommy faltered, eyes growing slightly wider if only by a fraction.**

**“... *Would* you know?” He asked, slightly quieter.**

Puffy giggled quietly, and even Techno gave a small huff of amusement.

**Once again, the elder man stayed quiet, and Tommy laughed nervously, running after him.**

*Maybe* it was beginning to get a bit easier to see the two as brothers. Though it still seemed somewhat... off.

**They continued through the forested area, large pine trees creating a sizable canopy above them while the younger of the two made amble chatter. Tommy continued to babble on and on about the most useless things, barely ever even stopping for air as his elder brother hardly paid attention.**

George rolled his eyes at all the talking.

**It wasn't until they reached a clearing that Tommy went very quiet.**

**Before them were dry plains that spread out far into the distance. The grass was long and thick as it blew in the wind, a scarce amount of animals were spread out and grazing upon it.**

“Ohhhh shit...” Quackity mumbled quietly.

**Tommy seized up almost immediately, eyes going wide. He pursed his lips, hand growing shaky.**

**“Uh...” He took a hesitant step backwards, breath catching in his throat.**

*Don't make him go back there,* Tubbo pleaded internally.

**Technoblade looked over, face unreadable.**

**“I don't... Do we...” Tommy looked over the area once more, “do we have to go that way?” There was a distant buzz in his ears, faint but steady.**

**“Look Tommy,” Techno sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose, “you said you would help me get my things back, and *this* is how we start getting leverage over them.”**

“There’s the apathetic asshole we know.” Fundy hissed.

“If you’d have waited two more seconds you would have seen I had a change of heart, Fundy.” Techno shot back.

The blond breathed shakily, “I- I know...”

There was a moment where Technoblade hesitated, looking down at his younger brother. He frowned slightly at the sight of him.

“If you *really* don’t want to go, I guess-”

“No,” Tommy interrupted, shaking his head. He took a deep breath, steadying his hands. “I can do this.”

“Shut up no you cannot.” Karl shook his head, looking pained. “I don’t *want* to go back!” He whined quietly.

Technoblade narrowed his eyes, silent for just a minute, before shrugging. “If you say so.” He relented.

“This is going to end so badly.”

Tommy remained silent.

And so they continued on their trek, scanning every square inch of the area as they looked for any and every wolf they could find. Unfortunately for them, however, there wasn’t much in sight, save for the dog they’d already tamed back in the forest.

**By the time Technoblade came back into awareness, Tommy was missing from his side.**

**“Tommy?” He called, looking up and around. The space beside him felt empty, and he, for whatever reason, felt weary. He found the boy just a couple feet away with his back turned.**

Niki frowned.

**He was completely silent, tense with his shoulders hiked up. His eyes were wide, hands shaking. Slowly, he was walking off, completely in his own head.**

**“Tommy,” Technoblade repeated, “Tommy come back here.”**

**But Tommy didn’t listen, breathing shakily and continuing to walk forwards. Techno’s ear twitched in annoyance, and he made one last call to the boy, but it was ignored once again.**

**“Oh whatever...” He muttered, waving it off, “I still need to find those dogs.” Turning on his heel, he began his march to the left.**

*“Techno!”* Phil all but yelled, turning to look at his eldest. “What the hell are you doing!?”

“What the hell *was* I doing,” the piglin corrected, “and you all saw me try! You saw that he wasn’t listenin to me!”

“You barely tried!” Jack shot back, though he wasn’t sure what had him so riled up, but he was feeling rather *anxious* watching Tommy go off on his own.

“I gave it an effort, but I’m not gonna drop everything for him!”

“That’s exactly why he shouldn’t have been with you, asshole!” Quackity cried angrily, “Tommy would have been better off *alone* than with you and your shitty house!”

“Now that’s just rude... It’s a very nice house.” Techno muttered quietly, which only served to make the duck hybrid angrier. *Why didn’t he ever take anything serious?*

“Techno!” He cried, “look at what you’re doing!” he gestured towards the screen, “you’re-you’re throwing him to the wolves! You have to try harder!”

“Okay but you’re saying that like I can change anything now.” Technoblade raised a brow, unimpressed.

“No, I’m saying it like you should have *known!*” Quackity hissed, grabbing at his hair angrily, “Tommy was in such a bad state after exile and I *know* you knew, we all know you knew! So why didn’t you try harder? Why were some fucking *wolves* more important to you!? Did you not care about him?”

Tommy winced, and both Tubbo and Ranboo shot him a concerned glance.

“It’s complicated...” The piglin hybrid replied, looking slightly uncomfortable.

“Well then you have your answer right there!” Quackity replied, “Tommy should have been with someone who replied that they did and still do without hesitation. You can’t do that. He didn’t deserve to be stuck with you and your mixed signals.”

“Mixed signals?” Techno raised a brow.

“One minute you like him, the next minute some dogs are more important to you.” Puffy interjected, “Even *I* can’t tell what you’re thinking in half of these memories!”

“I didn’t know what happened to him in exile! This is just how I am!” He tried to reason.

“But you should have *tried* to know,” Ranboo stressed, “you don’t- I mean like, if someone’s that hurt and that *scared* of everything, would you not try and help them? Would you not ask them what happened?”

“Tommy didn’t want to talk about it.”

“Of course he didn’t want to talk about it,” the enderman replied, “he’s *Tommy!* I’m not saying you should have pushed him to a point where he was uncomfortable but you should have at least tried a bit harder.” He paused, “And... And I know it’s easy for us to sit here and judge because it wasn’t *us* in that position and that maybe we would have made mistakes too, but they still would have been just that. They would have been mistakes. And I want *you* to know they’re mistakes. I want *you* to know that you handled this poorly.”

Tommy stared with wide eyes and Quackity smirked proudly.

For a moment, Techno was silent, as if sizing Ranboo up. The enderian didn’t look very angry, but he was a composed person.

“Fine,” He relented, “maybe I could have tried harder.” He scowled.

Ranboo said nothing, only turning back to the screen. Tommy leaned over across him to ‘whisper’ to Tubbo.

“*He’s pretty good at his whole monologue thing, huh?*” He grinned. Tubbo snickered, nodding along.

Ranboo rolled his eyes fondly.

**Tommy paid him no mind.**



**Slowly but surely, Tommy made his way over the hill. He was breathing heavily, hands shaking in clenched fists.**

**“And we’re right back to terrible town.”**

**“Shut up, Fundy.”**

**And then he saw the tower.**

**He hadn’t been looking up. He hadn’t been looking very far into the distance either. He hadn’t seen it from afar like he should have.**

**Taking hesitant steps, he choked back a gasp, forcing himself to go further. He crossed over into what he would have deemed ‘official’ Logstedshire territory, silently assuring himself over and over again that it was fine.**

Sapnap put his head in his hands, anxiously waiting for it to be over.

**He looked over at the crater in the ground, and then to the *bigger* crater in the ground. He tried to hold back a gag at the sight of the remains of the tent, pushing back tears.**

**“Technoblade?” He called out hesitantly, taking a step back. He turned his head, looking for his elder brother and swallowing nervously when he found he was alone.**

Techno pursed his lips.

**“Uh...” He took a hesitant step backwards, stumbling over a root in the ground and nearly falling. He looked up at the pillar and paled, breathing becoming more erratic. “*Technoblade?*” He called out again, a hint of panic in his tone.**

**Farther off in the distance, a creeper went off, and Tommy bit back a scream.**

Sam frowned.

**The screen switched to much later in the day, a completely haggard and downtrodden Technoblade dragging his feet through the snow. The sun was beginning to set, and he was back in the Antarctic.**

“Dude, the scene change makes it look like you *died* or something.”

Tommy laughed loudly, ignoring the pit in his stomach at the words.

**He looked down at his communicator, brow furrowed and mouth pulled into a deep frown.**

**Technoblade:**

**Where are you?**

**Did you go back home?**

**I can't find you.**

**Tommy.**

**This isn't funny.**

**I'm going back home,**

**I can't find you anywhere.**

“I wish you would have gotten lost...” Quackity muttered quietly.

“I am literally the king of navigation.” Techno replied dryly.

**He sighed, pocketing the device as he reached the cottage. He slowly climbed up the stairs, opening the front door and peeking inside.**

**It was dark; the drapes were drawn, the fireplace was off, and not a single lantern or candle had been lit. Just barely through the darkness, he saw a figure hunched on the couch. He entered further into the house, closing the door behind him.**

**“Tommy?” He called hesitantly, a bit on edge.**

**Almost instantly, the blond reacted. He snapped his head up, turning as fast as he possibly could and scrambling up from where he was sitting to approach the man.**

***“Technoblade!” He cried! “I’m so sorry! I- I was supposed to be helping you I know but then I went off on my own and- and I saw.... I saw it. ”***

**Karl frowned sadly, hating the way Tommy felt like he needed to apologize of all things.**

**Technoblade didn’t have a clue what *it* was. He sighed, putting a hand on Tommy’s shoulder. “I’m not mad, Tommy,” he said, “I got a dog so it’s good enough. We’ll just breed it with some L’Manburg dog, it’ll be fine.”**

**Tommy looked hesitant, holding back the shakes and shivers that were trying to crawl up his spine.**

**Niki’s stomach lurched.**

**“But-”**

**“It’s fine, Tommy.” Techno stressed, his red eyes staring deeply into Tommy’s blue-grey ones. “I’ll go make dinner. You can check up on the animals.” He stripped off his boots and large coat, moving towards the doorway.**

**The blond nodded wordlessly, watching as Technoblade left the room, anxiously rubbing at the angry red scratches on his neck.**

“I’m getting unbearably tired of this shit...” Tommy muttered, angrily glaring at the screen.

“I’m sure it’ll be over soon.” Puffy smiled sympathetically.

“Puffy I love you like a mother but if you smile at me like that again I will.... well I don’t know what I’ll do but I don’t need all that pity shit.”

“It’s not pity, Tommy,” she sighed, “we’ve been over this.”

“*Mi mi mi mi~*” Tommy mocked in a high-pitched voice, “that’s all I hear.”

Puffy’s eye twitched.

**When Technoblade walked back into the living room, some of the lanterns were on. He nodded at the change and rounded the couch to tell Tommy dinner was ready.**

Almost instantly, Techno went completely rigid. He tensed, eyes widening a fraction. He hadn’t even *thought* of the memory at hand being one of the ones on display. If not for his sake then for Tommy’s.

**What he found instead, was Tommy with his head pressed up against the armrest of the couch, curled up tightly and sound asleep. He had a peaceful expression on his face, mouth open just enough to hear the sound of his slightly strained breathing.**

Tommy glared at the screen, while everyone else seemed to think it was adorable.

**Techno's features softened, if only a little, and he leaned down to card a hand through the boy's hair. He paused in the candlelight, staring down at Tommy's pale face.**

**For a moment he was very still.**

Phil frowned, confused.

Something felt off.

***I could kill you right now, he thought, expression never changing as he watched the younger sleep. I don't want to, but I know I could.***

“Well, I was not expecting that. That's for sure!” Fundy chirped, sweating nervously.

Tommy all but seized, not daring to look back at the man, his *brother*, behind him, but he felt as though he could feel Techno's hand in his hair.

Everyone else seemed equally as perturbed, and Techno clenched his fists tightly.

**He stared down, running his hands gently through the blond hair.**

***I don't want to see you hurt. And even less do I want you dead. He swallowed thickly, tracing a scar on Tommy's cheek with his thumb, but I can't stop thinking about how easy it would be to snap your neck. You trust me. You wouldn't expect it. I could stab you right now and you'd die in my arms.***

Tommy had to hold back a gag, shivers running up his spine.

The remainder of the room was silent, completely entranced.

Techno grit his teeth.

***I don't want to do that. I don't.***

Tommy shifted slightly in his sleep, and Techno moved back if only by an inch.

**“When you were a baby, I thought the same thing,” he murmured, suddenly speaking aloud, “I was so excited to hold you, I was, but that was my first time holding so much *power* over another living thing and I was just hit with the realization that I could kill you so easily.”**

Phil sucked in a large breath, staring with wide eyes.

He sighed, running an exasperated hand through his own long hair.

**“I just wanted to hold my baby brother but all I could think about was all the different ways I could hurt you. You were so *little* it would have been so easy to break your tiny bones.” Technoblade rubbed at his face, looking pained, “I never *wanted* to hurt you, I *don't* want to hurt you, but even now your bones are so brittle and you're so *small* I could kill you in seconds.”**

**“You make me hate myself, Tommy.” He whispered quietly.**

The screen went dark.

A heavy silence hung over the room. Tommy was very quiet, trying to ignore the... imagery of past events quite like what Technoblade had been describing.

Even Fundy knew better than to speak. Tommy might've found him funny, but his other uncle...

"Oh Tech..." Phil whispered, eyes welling with tears, "Why didn't you ever tell me?"

Because despite his anger and disappointment, Technoblade was still Phil's son, and his heart still ached for his boy.

"Are you insane?" Techno replied, but everyone could hear the panic laced in his tone and the rough edge that hadn't been there before.

"I could have *been there* for you." Phil tried, looking pained.

"I couldn't risk that," the younger scoffed, "you think I'd just *tell* people how- how messed up my brain is? I'm already *The Blood God* without all that!"

For a moment his father was very quiet, and then he sighed. "I just wish you would have told me..." He said, quietly.

Technoblade didn't answer, and the screen switched to the next scene, abruptly ending the conversation.

**It was about midday when it happened. Tommy was lounging lazily on the couch, a half-eaten golden apple in his hand. The fireplace was up and running, keeping him from freezing to death, and the sun was filtering in through the windows.**

**Then, Technoblade all but slammed the front door open, looking disheveled with his communicator in hand. He stared over at Tommy.**

**“You need to hide.” He commanded, “Now.”**

**Tommy tilted his head, furrowing his brow. “What’re you talking about?”**

**“Dream’s coming.” Techno replied, peering out the windows to check for the man.**

Almost everyone felt a pit grow in their stomachs at that.

Of course, the man would have come looking.

**“Dream?” The blond almost instantly perked up, hastily finishing his apple and standing. “That’s nothing to panic over, he’s my friend! I... I’ve missed him!”**

Puffy wanted to rip her hair out.

**“No,” the elder shook his head, “absolutely not. Get in the box, just like we discussed.”**

**“But-”**

**“Tommy *please*.” Techno insisted, still peering out into the distance at opposite ends of the house, preparing for Dream to show up out of nowhere.**

**Tommy paused, staring as his brother hurriedly checked his communicator. He frowned, but made his way over to the box all the same, uncorking an invisibility potion and downing it before stuffing himself inside the box.**

**“I hate this.” He muttered quietly.**



**There was no reply.**

**Tommy's elbow hit the corner of the box as he tried to shift and he had to bite back a whine, clenching his eyes shut tight. "I *really* hate this."**

"Well, it's nice to know there was a plan, at least..." Sam commented.

"Even if it does look super uncomfortable." Karl added.

**Soon enough, however, there was a knocking at the door, and he shut his lips tight, practically holding his breath.**

**He heard the loud creak of the heavy wooden door and the sound of boots entering the house.**

A thick tension washed over the room, and Sarnap held his breath.

**"Dream!" Techno greeted, a nervous laugh coming not shortly after. "How are you?"**

**"Good, good," Dream replied, "I assume you are as well."**

Quackity sneered.

**The voice sent shivers down Tommy's spine and a jolt up his neck.**

**"Oh yeah," Techno nodded along, "retirement's a piece of cake, you know? But what have you been up to?"**

**There was a pause.**

**“Oh, you know, just a bit of everything.” Dream hummed, “I’ve been... busy.”**

*Busy abusing a kid...* Fundy thought bitterly, scowling.

**Tommy grit his teeth, clenching his fists tight.**

**“Oh really?” Technoblade implored, and it sounded like he was leaning in a bit closer, “does that have something to do with the reason you decided to visit?”**

**“Perhaps....” There was a bit of a playful lilt in Dream’s tone, but one that implied he wanted the fish to bite the bait only so he could watch it writhe and wriggle when the hook pierced its flesh.**

**“Well don’t be coy, Dream,” Techno grinned, “I’m all ears. You know I’m always here to help out a friend.”**

**Dream laughed at that, and the sound of it made Tommy flinch violently, his head hitting the back of the box with a muffled *thump!***

It was unbelievably nerve-racking to watch. All they could wonder was if Dream would catch on, if Dream would find him.

It was hard to imagine how stressful it must have been in the moment.

**All was quiet for a moment, and Tommy clamped a hand over his mouth, tears building in his eyes clenched tightly shut.**

**“Well?” Techno asked, beginning to rhythmically tap his boot on the floor, “I’m waiting.”**

**“I’m looking for Tommy.” Dream said at once, voice a little bit more on edge than before.**

**“Who?”**

**“Oh my god...” Phil muttered, putting his head in his hands.**

**Tommy, despite the circumstances, laughed.**

**If Tommy could have stuck his head out of that box and told his big brother what a fucking idiot he was he would have done it in a heartbeat.**

**“Your younger brother.” The masked man said pointedly.**

**“Ohhh,” Techno played along, “yeah that guy... I heard he was exiled. That was pretty funny.”**

**“Not.” Jack snapped.**

**Dream paused again before speaking;**

**“Well he *was*... He escaped though.” He muttered.**

**“Escaped?” Technoblade snorted, “What is he, your prisoner?”**

**“Have you seen Tommy or not, Techno?” Dream demanded suddenly, sounding aggravated.**

The blond in question winced, and many of them noted the way the man had danced around the inquiry.

**Tommy bit back a whine at the tone. *Dream was angry. Dream was upset. It was his fault.***

**“Can’t say that I have, no.” The piglin hybrid replied, “Wait, where are you going? ....Dream?”**

**Tommy listened as both the voices and the sound of their footsteps slowly became more and more distant. He was left with his own thoughts.**

**So there he sat, in his little box, with Dream in the same house as him, thinking to himself *I hate this* over and over again until they returned.**

**By the time they did, Tommy’s limbs were beginning to protest. It was a cramped space, even for someone like him.**

**“Next person to put me in a little box is getting the shit beaten out of them, bee tee double you.” Tommy hissed.**

**“Seems fair,” Tubbo nodded.**

**“Look,” Dream began, walking into the room, “I’m just really worried about him, Okay? If you see him *please* tell me. He wasn’t doing too well when I last saw him and I don’t want him getting hurt.”**

**“That son of a bitch.” Quackity bared his teeth.**

**Tommy’s breath caught in the back of his throat, eyes widening.**

**“I didn’t know you two were that close.” Techno replied.**

**“He’s my friend,” Dream sighed, “and I really care about him so just- just tell me if you see him, okay?”**

**Techno was quiet for a moment before replying. “Alright, Dream.”**

Phil knew he shouldn’t have been so happy that his eldest was covering for Tommy. It was the decent thing to do, but it still made him warm.

**“Thank you,” the masked man said, smile evident in his tone, “thank you so much.”**

**Tommy listened as they exchanged other pleasantries and polite standings before eventually, one of them, Dream, made the move to actually end the conversation and leave. He listened as Dream’s boots in the snow grew further and further from the house, and as Techno shut and locked the door behind him.**

**Both of them were very quiet for a moment.**

**“Is he gone?” Tommy whispered, poking his head out of the box.**

**“Well I’d hope for your sake he is.” Techno snorted, rolling his eyes, “Imagine if you’d done that and he was standing right here.”**

A couple of them laughed, ignoring the picture The Blade had painted.

Tommy glared at him, though with the invisibility potion, it wasn't visible, and slowly clambered out of his hiding space. He padded over to Techno who was peering out the window.

"He's beating the hell out of a creeper on my front lawn right n-" Technoblade blinked as a loud explosion rang throughout the area, "aaand there goes my property value. Oh god it's so *ugly* now."

"I, for one, think it has always been ugly." Fundy quipped.

"Yeah, that's why you're banned." Techno snarked right back.

The teen at his side was silent, and when he looked down and over, Tommy was staring down at his communicator, clutching it tightly.

"What are you doing?" Techno asked, tilting his head.

Tommy frowned, looking out the window and then looking back down. "...I should call him. I should let him know I'm here. He's *worried*."

Puffy's heart broke at the words, and she frowned. It was so frustrating watching Tommy struggle like that. She hated seeing him try to differentiate whether or not Dream was friend or foe.

Technoblade's eyes narrowed, and he spun on his heel, crouching so that he could put both hands on the boy's shoulders and stare him in the eyes.

"Tommy," He began sternly, "I might not know you all that well, but I *do* know Dream, okay? And you do *not* want to call him. I don't know what's going on with you two but he is *hunting* you, okay? He's not worried about you."

Though an uncomfortable statement, it was true. Like a bloodthirsty hound, Dream had been on the hunt for Tommy, restlessly searching for him so he could pin him right back under his thumb.

Karl hugged himself tightly.

**The blond swallowed thickly, furrowing his brows, “but he said-”**

**“He was lying,” the elder interrupted, grip growing slightly tighter, “if you value your safety or your life in this house at all you will *n ot* call him. Got it?”**

**Tommy nodded quietly, removing himself from Technoblade’s hold and taking a few steps back. He seemed to wilt at the words, big blue-grey eyes sad.**

**“I think I’ll go to my room for a bit.” He muttered, turning on his heel, staring at the ground.**

**Technoblade watched him go, frowning deeply.**

**The screen went dark.**

**“I never want to see that green fucker again in my life.” Quackity spat, brows drawn into an angry scowl.**

**“You won’t have to.” Sam assured, “he’s in the prison and he’s never getting out.”**

Tommy snapped his head to the side, glaring. *“Liar.”* He snarled.

Sam said nothing, but his body language did become slightly more guarded. He hiked up his shoulders, sitting up straighter.

“What the hell are you talking about?” Quackity asked, confused.

“He’s going to escape,” Tommy told them, turning to face the back rows, “it- it could be any day now! He’s going to escape and he’s going to revive Wilbur! And- and we’ll all be *fucked!*”

Everyone was very quiet for a moment, before Puffy turned around.

“Tommy-”

“*No!*” he all but cried, “I don’t want people telling me I’m crazy, okay!? I *know* what Dream has planned, he *told* me! And I tried to tell Sam and he ignored me! He brushed me off because he’s a *terrible* warden!”

Sam narrowed his eyes, “Tommy I’ve already *told* you that the prison is secure. Dream cannot esc-”

“*You’re the reason I died!*” Tommy screamed, and many people in the room flinched at the volume, “and now you’re going to be the reason *other* people die because of your- your *disregard* for them, Sam!”

“Listen to me-”

“I need him dead,” he seethed, “he’s going to hurt everyone if I don’t stop him! You let me *die*, Sam. And if you don’t stop fucking around other people are going to die too.”

The warden was silent, staring at the boy. Tommy’s chest was heaving, eyes red-rimmed but not a single tear had fallen. Ranboo and Tubbo were staring at each other, concerned, while



everyone else just looked majorly confused.

“What do you mean he let you die...?” Phil asked, very quietly from the back.

Tommy turned to stare at him, not saying a word.

“Tommy,” Phil pressed, a sense of urgency in his tone, “what do you mean?”

“Ranboo already told you,” Tommy rolled his eyes, smiling sadly, “you just didn’t believe him.”

Phil went very still, face going white. His eyes widened, and he looked his boy up and down, breathing shakily.

“No,” he shook his head, “no because you’re right here. Ranboo told us you *died*, Tommy! And you’re here which means you’re not dead! And that means that he was lying!”

“Oh yeah,” Tommy laughed, shaking his head, “because Ranboo’s definitely the kind of guy to do that,” he looked his father in the eyes, making Phil seize up, “I *died*, Phil. It wasn’t a fucking joke and it wasn’t a fucking lie. I don’t- I don’t want to talk about it and you’re making me talk about it but- but I was dead and Dream brought me back, okay?” He took a shaky breath, “Dream *killed me* and then used the revive book on me.”

Phil shook his head, tears running down his face, but he couldn’t form the words. Techno was completely silent beside him.

The other members of the room were quietly watching, not daring to utter a word.

Fundy smiled, tears running down his face as he held back disbelieving laughs.

Niki said nothing.

“Now everyone shut the fuck up because we’re getting this over with so I can go kill Dream and never deal with any of this fucking shit ever again, okay?” Tommy commanded, scanning the rows of people with a sour expression.

No one had a reply for him, and Phil began to weep quietly into his hands, but the screen started back up all the same. After all, a god would never wait on an angel.

Ranboo stared at Tommy sadly.

**Fire and brimstone surrounded both Tommy and Techno. The heat of the nether making them sweat as they stood at the portal hub. Beneath them, the lava bubbled.**

**They stood before the Nether Portal, staring into the purple swirls, both of them dressed in Netherite.**

Tommy sighed, growing ever so tired at the constant sight of the Nether. He never wanted to see it again.

**“Now listen to me, Tommy,” Techno said sternly, checking behind him to make sure his dog was still there, “you need to stick close to me this time, okay? If you don’t it could get *very* messy.”**

**“I know I know,” Tommy rolled his eyes, “now let’s go already!” He practically jumped, bounding towards the portal.**

It was unusually silent in the room. Just the sound of Phil’s muffled cries.

**Techno scoffed, following suit. He was consumed by the waves of purple particles, a small bout of nausea overtaking him, before he was met with the clear blue skies of the**

**overworld instead of the brimstone ceilings of the Nether.**

**He looked side to side for Tommy, but within seconds realized the kid had already descended the staircase, making his way down towards the community house.**

**He groaned loudly, chasing after the boy.**

Quackity smiled softly at Tommy's eagerness.

**"Tommy!" He called out, albeit quieter than usual, "get back here!"**

**The blond paid him no mind, traversing through the SMP in what seemed like shock. He stared up in amazement at all the buildings, eyes wide with wonder and mouth agape.**

**"I'm back..." He whispered, "I'm really truly *back* ."**

Tubbo frowned.

It was odd not having verbal reactions, but those who normally commented the most had their lips zipped tight after the last debacle.

**Techno ran up to him, tagging him on the shoulder and shooting him a reprimanding look. "We aren't here for sightseeing, Tommy."**

**Tommy glared, crossing his arms. "I think you should be a little bit more sensitive." He gritted, "This is my *home*, Technoblade, that I was *exiled* from."**

No one said a word, but Karl did look sad.

**They continued their trekk across the prime path, walking further and further into the area.**

**“That is exactly my point,” The elder replied, “neither of us are supposed to be here. We have to be *discreet*.”**

**Tommy let out an annoyed huff, but diligently followed all the same. He looked down at the dog following them, beaming at it.**

Puffy smiled softly at the screen.

Sapnap pursed his lips. He’d never seen someone with such an intense love and fascination for animals and bugs.

**The next half hour was spent running amuck on the server, searching through homes and causing general chaos, before they ended up in a tiny hole in the ground that attached to the sewers.**

**They’d built a tiny stone platform to stand on, and dimly lit the area. The second dog they’d found was doing circles, panting happily.**

**The two worked in silence, Techno building out further and scanning their surroundings, and Tommy sitting on the ground while the dogs licked his face.**

Technoblade remembered that. He remembered being annoyed that Tommy refused to help. The kid was so lazy when it came to actual hard work.

It didn’t seem like such a big deal now.

**“You could at least help a little, you know?” The piglin asked, rolling his eyes.**

**Tommy couldn’t open his mouth, because one of the dogs would surely stick their tongue in it like the disgusting little fiends they were, so he just shook his head, “Mhm mhm.”**

Ranboo smiled.

**Techno sighed, continuing to work while his little brother messed around.**

**Five minutes later, however, he paused, looking back and cocking a grin.**

**“You wanna see where I escaped the execution from? It was down here.” He asked, amused.**

The blood drained from Tommy’s face.

Absolutely fucking not. He didn’t want to see it. None of them wanted to see it, actually.

**Almost instantly, Tommy shot up, grinning wide. “Really?”**

**“Come on,” Technoblade waved him along, “it’s not too far I don’t think.”**

Quackity scowled, and Tommy mirrored his expression, wishing he could tell his former self to wipe that excited grin from his face.

**He jumped from the platform, boots splashing in the steady stream of water that flowed through the decrepit tunnels. Tommy followed soon after, telling the dogs to stay. He**

**pulled a golden apple from his inventory, munching on it quietly as he followed his older brother.**

George shook his head. Tommy seriously had a problem when it came to those apples, and he couldn't help the fact that it made him slightly... sad.

Golden apples weren't something to be meddled with, silly as it may sound. They were enchanted items, they weren't a substitute for regular food and they weren't to be depended on. The effects were short-term for a reason.

**They continued down the twisty paths and confusing loops, until eventually, Techno found a crack in the wall, peering in fearlessly.**

**"This way." He ushered, dipping inside.**

**Tommy followed happily, humming quietly. As they got further in, however, he began to feel a bit uneasy. The walls carved of stone were smooth and finished, proving whoever had mined down that far had been in no rush.**

**Something felt... wrong.**

*Oh.* Tubbo's eyes grew wide.

Fundy frowned.

**"Ta-da~" Technoblade declared, throwing his arms out as they finally arrived at the end of the tunnel.**

**Tommy's eyes widened.**

**Blackstone came into view, and he stepped into a small room decorated in chests and signs. Each chest was labeled with a name. *Wilbur. Tommy. Tubbo. Fundy. Eret.***

**The floors were decorated with blood.**

*“Fuck...”* Fundy whispered, wincing and forcing himself to look away.

Tubbo closed his eyes, taking a deep breath.

**“Tommy?”** Techno tilted his head, cocking a brow.

**The boy was completely silent, staring in abject horror. His breaths were shaky and short, and his fists were clenched tightly at his side.**

**“What happened here, Tommy?”** His older brother asked, leaning over, concerned and confused.

Well... Now he knew.

**Images of pistons activating, of eyes losing their life, of blood spewing from Wilbur’s chest and Tubbo’s neck, they all flashed through his head.**

**Without another word Tommy whirled around and sprinted, booking it out of the room as fast as he could. Technoblade let out a surprised noise, backing away slightly, but he paid him no mind, running as fast as he could as tears pricked at his eyes and he panted.**

**He reached the main sewers, turning to the left and continuing to run as his feet splashed loudly in the water. He gasped for air, trying to control his breathing, before finally stopping once he’d rounded a corner.**

**He moved to the side of the tunnel, towards the elevated ledge out of the water, and slid down with his back against the wall, burying his head in his hands and gripping tightly at his hair.**

Puffy's heart went out to the boy, and she grounded herself with his presence behind her. He was safe. Now that she'd gotten him back she wouldn't let him get hurt like that ever again.

**Tears dripped down his chin as he whined quietly, pulling at his hair fervently and trying not to cry out. He could hear his own heartbeat in his ears, and he gasped loudly, placing a hand over his heart.**

***Before Tommy could blink, they were all dead, and Dream himself had put his blade through Tommy's chest. He fell onto the Blackstone, gasping for air as fluid entered his lungs.***

**He choked on his own spit, gargling on it and bending over on his hands and knees to rid himself of it. He took deep breaths, tears streaming down his face as he assured himself over and over again that there was nothing bubbling up in his lungs or throat.**

George winced, looking away.

Jack felt a pit growing in his stomach.

**A gentle hand was placed on his shoulder.**

**Tommy looked up, meeting the red eyes of his older brother, which seemed to somewhat glow in the dim lighting of the sewers.**

He remembered that. Tommy remembered meeting Technoblade's gaze in the dark and thinking to himself that he was safe. He could remember believing that his big brother would



keep him safe.

**“You’re okay,” Technoblade told him quietly, “I don’t know what happened in there but it’s over now, and you’re safe, Tommy.”**

Techno frowned.

**The teen nodded, sniffing and wiping at his nose with his sleeve.**

**They sat there in silence for what felt like hours.**

**“Can we build our hideout somewhere farther from that room?” He all but whispered, looking down at the ground.**

**“Of course, Tommy.”**

**The screen went dark.**

Normally that would be where Phil cut in with some comment on how nice it was to see his boys getting along, or perhaps commending Technoblade for his rare tender moment, but nothing came.

Phil was quiet, eyes red-rimmed and puffy. He didn’t speak, and they felt an unusual lull in the general swing of things.

Tommy wasn’t sure what to say or how to react. To be quite honest, he hadn’t been expecting that level of reaction from his father, but Phil seemed *devastated*. It was odd to see, without a doubt. He’d spent so many nights crying and begging for his father and Techno to give him the time of day that when they finally did he didn’t even believe it.

Was it... wrong that his father's tears made his chest feel warm?

He'd wanted for so long for someone to care like *that* about his death but he couldn't help but bask in the feeling. Someone *cared*. Even if Phil had dismissed it at first, it'd been because he didn't believe it, not because he didn't care.

Tommy's father loved him; that was the only explanation.

So he sat there, quietly enjoying the sound of Phil's cries, as everyone else remained silent.

Ranboo held back a shudder at the smile on Tommy's face.

# pride.

## Chapter Summary

bpd tommy is REAL.

## Chapter Notes

LOL, SRY GUYS

My Life got complicated and I totally forgot about this (you can blame my Job and my ADHD, sorry again)

BUT THANK YOU ALL FOR THE SUPPORT! <3 I know you're able to read the, uhhhh, original story using the time machine website, but please do note that I will be continuing this from where it left off (after including the ending Newt\_and\_toads wrote)

But please be patient with me cause I do forget-  
A lot

I do have a discord though! It has all my current stories and I'll inform people of when updates do come out, so if you're interested, let me know in the comments <3

“Are you mad at me?”

Ranboo blinked, looking up and over at the blond to his left. He frowned, tilting his head in confusion.

“Why would I be mad at you?” He asked.

Tommy narrowed his eyes at the older boy, squirming uncomfortably. The bandages around his right hand had been clumsily wrapped back tightly. He fidgeted with the hem of the sweater Ranboo had let him borrow.

“I dunno,” he muttered, “you just seem like it.”

The enderman hybrid paused, looking back at his husband who merely offered him a useless shrug. He tried to think of anything that might’ve given Tommy the impression that he was, in fact, upset, but there was nothing that came to mind.

He’d been gentle with Tommy the entire time, and he’d been a shoulder to lean on (metaphorically) whenever the boy needed. He was quick to smile and reassure the boy, and they’d had nothing but positive interactions throughout their time in the room.

Realistically, Tommy knew that. In the back of his head he was well aware that Ranboo had done nothing to actually insinuate any level of discontent, but he also knew that Ranboo wasn’t laughing as much at his jokes as he had been in the beginning. Ranboo wasn’t making those stupid sarcastic quips to lighten the mood. Every bone in his body was screaming that Ranboo was mad at him.

“I’m not mad at you,” Ranboo shook his head, “not at all.”

Tommy scowled. He looked the enderman hybrid up and down, something bitter churning within him.

*He’s lying. He’s lying and he hates you.*

“Fuck you.” He said simply, trying not to get even angrier than he already was, “fuck you, Ranboo.”

Everyone else around him frowned, confused. A few people began to speak at once, and it made him grimace.

“What’s going on?” Sapnap inquired, leaning forward. Both Ranboo and Tubbo turned to explain.

Tommy grit his teeth, bringing his hands up and carding them through his hair in an attempt to ground himself. The fabric of the chair was suddenly too itchy and his clothes were rubbing up against him in all the wrong ways and his hair was too messy and too many people were talking and it was too cold and his shoes were a size too small and Ranboo was mad at him and everyone hated him and he'd be alone and he was stuck in this stupid room and everyone was watching his most humiliating moments and he had to kill Dream and he didn't know where to start or what to do it was all just *too much*.

"Shut up!" He shrieked loudly, halting the group, "Everyone shut up!"

They stared at him, perplexed.

"Tommy-"

"Fuck off!" He seethed. He let out a low whine, closing his hands into fists and hitting them against his head. He didn't know what to do but it was too much and it was making him so *angry*.

Ranboo's eyes widened, and for a moment he moved to grab Tommy's wrists, but the younger's eyes snapped open, zeroing in on him and all but *begged* him to back away. He watched as Tommy bit the inside of his cheek.

Almost instantly, Puffy whirled around. She stood quickly, looking at the blond.

Most people in the room seemed rather annoyed with the outburst, not understanding why on earth they weren't allowed to speak when Tommy himself had been doing so just moments before.

"What the hell-"

“*Shh!*” Puffy shushed violently, making Jack blink as though taken aback. He scowled at the blond teen up front.

Tommy itched anxiously at his scalp, lips pulled into a tight frown. He was so *uncomfortable*, but he couldn’t leave the room because they were stuck and Drista along with everyone else would think he was pathetic if he demanded to leave.

He scratched absentmindedly at his ear, cracking his knuckles and taking deep laboured breaths.

Jack frowned bitterly.

In the moment, the apology from Tommy had seemed like everything had been wrapped neatly with a bow and pushed away, but that wasn’t how things worked. Jack knew he’d told Tommy he was mad and that he didn’t forgive him, but he’d thought he’d gotten over... the anger.

For some reason, he still felt his gut churn every time he looked at Tommy. For some reason, he still felt something red and hot inside of him.

He was trying, he really was. He’d been watching everything Tom had been through and it made his heart *ache* because no matter what had happened that was his former friend and a *kid*; but the anger didn’t just go away.

Tommy had *killed* him. Tommy had always spoken over him and brushed him off and it hurt because all Jack had ever wanted was to feel like someone that mattered.

It might’ve not been a big deal for Tommy but to Jack, it was everything and more.

So even though he understood the pain, the grief, and the reasonings, reconciliation was never as simple as an apology.

When Tommy made his crude remarks or shouted at everyone, Jack still felt the anger. And he watched as Puffy shushed them all, watched as Tommy got to tell them all to be quiet because he felt like it, watched as everyone *listened to him*. It all just made the resentment build further, and that in itself made him sick.

It would be a *long* time before he'd be able to look Tommy in the eyes without his hands itching at his sides.

He cocked his head to the side and noticed Niki staring quietly with an even more scathing expression than his own. Her nails were digging into the armrests, and her teeth were grit. He furrowed a brow, making a somewhat confused face at her.

Of all the people to hold onto grudges, to hold onto their hatred for Tommy after all they'd seen, the last person he'd expected it to be was Niki. She'd always been so kind and forgiving that it almost didn't feel right.

Then again, he'd never actually *asked* what Tommy had done to Niki to make her hate him so fervently. For all he knew it could have been something downright rotten that no amount of sob stories could lessen.

The two of them had only ever touched surface level with one another. Little things, things like a shared vague hate for the boy and a shared irate nature. Jack didn't know her reasonings, and knowing *Niki*; sweet and loving Niki, he'd give her the benefit of the doubt.

The screen flickered to life.

In the front row, Tommy grit his teeth, itching at his eye and trying to stomp out the tight pain in his chest.

The others were quiet.

Ranboo glanced worriedly at the blond.

**“Kinda crazy that we haven’t been caught yet, innit?” Tommy asked, grinning slightly.**

**Both him and Techno were quietly making their way through the dimly lit sewers. The crudely shaped tunnels had proven to be the most effective way to get around without being spotted.**

Tommy’s heart instantly dropped, and he lost all color in his face.

**“That would be thanks to me,” Techno rolled his eyes, amused, “you would have been seen ages ago.”**

**“Hey!” Tommy cried indignantly, toeing on the edge of the ledges, “I’m perfectly capable of taking care of myself!”**

**His older brother raised a brow, which only proved to irk him all the more.**

**The two continued to bicker the entire trek through the sewers before finally stumbling upon a water elevator.**

Sam watched quietly. It truly was odd seeing the two act like siblings, even if that's what they really were. It just... didn’t seem real.

No matter how many times he saw the two acting like brothers, it just never felt *right*.

**Tommy all but beamed at it, and quickly shot up, not waiting for Technoblade’s go-ahead. His brother didn’t look very impressed, but he paid no mind. He was too excited to be *home*.**



The blond gripped the armrests of his seat tightly, biting his tongue.

Anyone in the room who didn't hate him already surely would after this.

**He all but flew up the stream, clenching his eyes shut tight and grimacing at the water's pressure, but before he knew it he had popped right out and onto the grass. He sighed happily, shaking his head back and forth to rid himself of the water, his bangs glued to his head.**

**Techno appeared right behind him, much more gracefully and proper, and then froze.**

**Tommy followed his gaze, the blood draining from his face.**

**"Uh... Hey guys." Connor grinned, waving nervously.**

**"You jinxed it." Fundy commented, not very intrigued.**

Technoblade was quiet.

Tommy didn't even so much as glance back at his nephew, practically frozen in place.

**The two clad in netherite stared blankly at the man in the hedgehog onesie, not speaking.**

**With a heavy sigh, Technoblade advanced on Connor, cornering him and encasing him in stone. The latter cried out indignantly, yelling for help.**

**"Oh." Tubbo said quietly, face blank. "I remember this."**

Tommy took a shuddering breath.

**Tommy was quiet, peering around his house. He stared, eyes wide. Signs littered the small hut, and he narrowed his gaze.**

### *Connoreatspants' House*

“Yikes.” Karl hummed, “House theft.”

**The blond cocked his head to the side, frowning deeply. He backed away slightly, glancing back at the two squabbling behind him.**

**“This is my house...” he muttered, “mine...”**

“You sound like a child.” Jack snorted.

“He is one.” Phil snapped back, eyes red-rimmed and puffy.

Tommy shifted uncomfortably.

**Connor and Technoblade continued to speak, but it faded in his mind. He pursed his lips, fists clenching at his side.**

**Someone had taken over his house. *His* house. As if he was never to return.**

*“Tommy, you would never actually.... Y’know...” Dream looked up at him, “You’re here for a very long time, Tommy.”*

Tubbo winced, pursing his lips.

Puffy frowned sadly.

**Tommy swallowed back bile, gritting his teeth.**

**“I still want to come back...” he whispered, “I’m not gone forever, I’m *not*.”**

“Of course you’re not.” Sam hummed, “That was just big talk on Dream’s part.”

Tommy paused, cocking his head to the side. He looked at the creeper hybrid.

“I don’t think it was.” He muttered.

Ranboo looked puzzled, furrowing his brow.

“What are you talking about?” Sapnap asked.

“I think I... I would’ve been there forever.” Tommy inhaled sharply, trying to keep himself contained, “I-If I hadn’t gotten myself out of there, no one would have done it for me.”

“Tommy-”

“If I hadn’t left, if I hadn’t saved myself, I would still be there.” He said, mouth suddenly very dry. He narrowed his eyes. “No one was going to help me. Dream was right. I *was* going to be there for a long time.”

“That’s not-” Tubbo started up, looking upset, “No- I mean- I went to visit! I showed up right after!”

Tommy was very quiet, and for a moment Tubbo thought he just wasn’t going to answer.

“But would you have gotten me out of there?” He asked, “Or would you have just- just changed the rules?”

The elder teen tilted his head, confused.

“You weren’t in a position where you could just null my exile, Tubbo. D-” Tommy paused, taking a deep breath, “Dream h-had you wrapped around his finger too, don’t you fuckin forget. He had all the power and- and you had L’Manberg to worry about, yeah?” he laughed, shaking his head, “don’t you get it? Even if you’d known there wouldn’t have been anything you could have done! You could have told Dream to leave me alone or made an effort to visit but it wouldn’t *matter* because Dream would just find a way back to me! Even in a- a place where *I* should have the upper hand, where he should be *powerless*, he will *always* find a way to beat me down!”

*And that’s why he has to die.*

“That’s not true,” Tubbo shook his head, gritting his teeth, “Don’t say that. I would have *saved* you, Tommy.”

“Oh, so that- what, Doomsday could happen even sooner? So that you could go down in history as an even *worse* president? Because you chose- you chose your friend, an enemy of the nation, over L’Manberg?” Tommy was near shaking, and he wasn’t sure if it was fear or adrenaline or something else, “it doesn’t fucking *matter*, Tubbo! None of this has ever fucking mattered! It’ll always be my fault! I- *I’m* the problem! Bad things happen because of *me!*”

He thought back to everything Wilbur had said to him in the void. *Months* of it on repeat in the void.

Tubbo looked pained, shaking his head. He moved to reply, “To-”

“The server was better off with me dead.” Tommy muttered, smiling bitterly.

All at once, the temperature in the room dropped, and all the color drained from Tubbo’s face.

Phil’s wings flared up involuntarily, and a low sort of muffled shriek built up in his throat. Beside him, Technoblade tensed.

Karl gasped loudly, wrenching away from Sapnap’s side as the blaze hybrid’s skin became unbearably hot.

“*Tommy!*” Ranboo cried, horrified.

The blond shifted uncomfortably in his seat, glaring at the carpet. He didn’t speak.

“Take it back.” Tubbo demanded, shoulders shaking.

Tommy said nothing, completely silent.

“*Take it back!*” The elder teen screamed, tears building in the corners of his eyes. Tommy flinched, but still didn’t speak.

Niki and Jack shared a wide-eyed look, remaining quiet.

“Do you honestly think I was *better* with you gone?” Tubbo inquired, “You- you think I could even- even function? I couldn’t *breathe* every second you were gone and I- and I tried so hard to understand and I just couldn’t! It was only a couple of days but I didn’t know what to *do* anymore!”

Fundy was staring sadly, ears pinned back anxiously.

“You said nothing matters, that nothing has ever mattered,” Tubbo muttered, “but the only time I’ve ever felt like that was when you were gone.”

Tommy inhaled sharply, eyes going wide. He felt a pain spike in his chest, nails digging into his palms.

Still, he didn’t speak.

Tubbo stared at him, hands shaking at his sides.

No one dared make a sound, and eventually, they went back to watching. The tension in the air was thick, almost suffocating.

**He whirled around, baring his teeth at Connor and stalking closer.**

**“This is my house!” He cried, throwing his arms up, “You can’t just take it, Connor!”**

**The older man tilted his head, pausing in his panic to face the teen.**

**“You were evicted,” Connor replied, “that means it was free for me to take.”**

Fundy's eyes flitted back and forth, wondering if he'd be allowed to make a small quip.

He'd rather not face Tubbo's wrath.

**Tommy paused for a moment, as if contemplating the legitimacy of the statement, before turning on his heel angrily and facing his back to the man.**

**He gripped at his hair, tugging at it and groaning loudly, turning back around once more.**

**"Techno, *Technoblade*," he stressed, putting his hands together, eyes tired and distressed, "what's the next stage after anger, what comes next?"**

**"Violence." Came his brother's monotone reply.**

George made a face.

**Tommy blinked, losing his fire for a split second.**

**"Really?" He inquired.**

**"At least, for me, that's what comes next." Techno shrugged, looking uninterested.**

**Connor was watching them wearily, trapped within the stone.**

**"Alright," Tommy took a deep breath, pulling himself back together, "alright then I'll follow your lead." He was still for just a moment before beaming up at the elder.**

And *oh* that felt like a punch to the gut.

Tommy was so ready to follow Technoblade. Tommy was so ready to follow someone, so *lost* after everything that exile had been and so desperate for someone to tell him what to do just like Dream had.

**The two were quiet for a few minutes, shuffling around awkwardly and trying to figure out where they would go on from there. Then, Technoblade cleared his throat, garnering his brother's attention.**

**"I've got a plan," he stated, and Tommy looked eager to hear what it was, smiling wide, "We need to take Connor hostage and hold him for ransom."**

"Oh..."

Tommy grit his teeth, bowing his head.

Tubbo was silent.

**Almost instantly, Tommy's face fell. His eyes widened slightly and he looked over at where they'd trapped the man. He frowned, taking a step back and wringing his hands together anxiously.**

**He bit the inside of his cheek, looking pained.**

**"What?" He asked finally, and it felt stupid the moment he said it. His brother seemed to think so as well.**

Phil felt a spike of pain in his chest, lips pursing.



*What the hell was Techno doing?*

He couldn't say or do things like that when Tommy was so desperately looking for someone to follow. He was- He was supposed to be a good influence. Tommy was *scared* and looking for guidance. He needed someone to guide and control him like Dream had.

**"I need my weapons back, Tommy." Technoblade explained, and Tommy was quick to snap back into a more appeasing manner, nodding quickly and trying to swallow back his upset.**

**He was quiet for a moment more.**

**"But I don't think we- I mean-" he took a shuddering breath, "I don't think Dream would be happy if I did this." He whispered, staring down at the ground.**

Quackity grit his teeth, narrowing his eyes at the screen.

Every time he thought of Tommy and Dream he felt so sick he thought he would die. He felt his heart sink every time the boy brought Dream up.

**In front of him, his brother sighed loudly, and Tommy couldn't hold back a flinch.**

Technoblade frowned.

**"Tommy..." Technoblade began, pinching the bridge of his nose, "I thought we went over this. Dream is *not* your friend. Dream wants to *hurt* you, Tommy."**

Sam's hands gripped the fabric of his robes tightly. He grit his teeth.

**The blond faltered, eyes widening. He took a step back.**

**“No but- but he came looking for me!” He argued, shaking his head.**

**“He was *hunting* you.”**

Ranboo pursed his lips, glancing over just slightly at the blond. Tommy’s eyes were trained on the screen, he was completely still.

**Tommy was quiet, staring at the ground with clenched fists. The room was silent.**

**“Whatever.” Technoblade rolled his eyes, moving along. He turned and began to mine the stone around Connor, and the latter shied away.**

Phil’s feathers ruffled slightly at the tone, frowning.

**And for a moment, Tommy thought quietly to himself. And he felt anger bubbling within him.**

***Dream doesn’t care about you.***

**Dream hurt him. Dream was against him. Dream wasn’t his friend.**

**Techno, however, wanted to help him. Techno wouldn’t lie to him. Techno wanted what was best for him.**

**“No no no!” Tommy cried, reaching out.**

**He summoned an axe from his inventory, taking a deep breath.**

**When he looked up, he was grinning. “I’m ready.”**

“Oh Tommy...” Puffy tilted her head, eyes sad.

The blond grit his teeth, narrowing his gaze and staring holes into the carpeted floor. The people around seemed uncomfortable, and no one moved to speak.

**Technoblade and Tommy quickly made their way outside the house, dragging Connor along. The man in the onesie was trekking nervously, wringing his hands together.**

**They crossed a small unsturdy bridge, and Tommy looked back, eyes softening. He stopped for just a moment, frowning.**

**Techno continued along, unbothered, and it wasn’t until he felt a tug on his cape that he looked back. He raised a brow.**

**“What?” He asked dryly.**

**“Are you...” Tommy paused, taking a deep breath, “is- is this the right thing? Are you sure we’re doing the right thing?”**

A small bit of Puffy’s hope returned at that. Beneath it all, the sweet boy that Tommy had been before all the blood and pain, he was still in there.

**For a moment they were quiet, and Connor just watched uncomfortably, trying to slowly inch away.**

**Then, the elder sibling sighed, shaking his head.**

**“Of course, this is the right thing, Tommy.” He muttered, “I need my weapons back.”**

Tubbo narrowed his eyes.

“Yeah,” Fundy scoffed, “definitely the right thing.” He seemed more tense than usual, as if he knew they were on the precipice of something unpleasant.

“And you’re sure a *hostage* is the best way to go about that?” Quackity snarked.

“Well, were *you* sure that the Butcher Army was the best way to go about revenge?” Techno raised a brow, arms crossed.

“An eye for an eye,” The duck hybrid shrugged, turning further to face the piglin. The scar through his upper lip and up into his brow seemed more prominent in the low light. “You know how it is...”

Technoblade pursed his lips, looking away.

**Tommy stopped for just one second, mulling it over. An image of Wilbur holding him up in the air and cheering for him excitedly flashed in his mind.**

***“My right-hand man Tommyinnit!”***

Niki bit the inside of her cheek.

**He remembered the promises Wilbur had made. He remembered that Wilbur had told him they’d get the discs back; how they’d be even more important because of the**

**history they held, the history of the two of them fighting together.**

**Another image, of Dream holding the discs that time, flashed in his mind.**

**“This will help me get the discs back?” He asked, not entirely as confident as usual. Techno leveled him with a stare he couldn’t interpret.**

“Always the fucking discs...” Jack muttered.

Tommy frowned.

**“Yes.” Was all the elder said before powering on, not sparing his younger brother a second glance.**

**And so they continued, dragging Connor along with them into a barren area where they could watch for enemies from any sides. They dug a small hole, pushing him into it, and Tommy laughed loudly as they did.**

Many of them felt sick watching. They were so used to cheering for Tommy, to being on his side, but watching him treat Connor so poorly, they wanted nothing more than for him to stop.

**The young blond went ahead and screamed profanities at Connor, and for a moment it seemed as if a small bit of his spark was back, but almost as though it was... tainted. He didn’t seem the same, standing on shaky and much too thin legs, nearly weighed down by his axe, deep bruises under his greying eyes, and a wavering smile.**

Tommy felt sick watching. The entire week leading up to Doomsday had been a nauseous blur.

Behind him, Phil looked equally as perturbed.

**“Oh,” Techno huffed, looking off into the distance. Tommy followed his gaze, meeting green and red eyes that were staring wide at the two of them.**

**“Boob boy.” The blond huffed, rolling his eyes.**

**“That’s you.” Tubbo grinned slightly, trying to lighten the mood and elbowing Ranboo playfully.**

**Tommy’s gaze lingered on where their hands were touching and felt an itch in his bones.**

**Eventually, Techno left Tommy on his own with Connor. He promised to be back soon, telling Tommy to just be quiet and watch over their prisoner. Of course, Tommy didn’t bother listening.**

**He hooked the end of Connor’s onesie, dragging him over to a large pool of water and forcing him in, standing on the edge and grinning.**

**“Now say...” Tommy paused, deep in thought, “Blub blub I’m a fish!”**

**“Oh my god...” Sam muttered, putting his head in his hands.**

**Connor waded silently in the water, eyes narrowed angrily, not complying.**

**“Do it, bitch!” Tommy called again, pulling the rod slightly.**

**Begrudgingly, Connor did a little spin, gritting his teeth. “...Blub blub... I’m a fish.”**

**“Yes!” The blond cackled, throwing his head back excitedly. “There we go!”**

It was unnerving to watch. As cruel and violent as it was, it was still inherently childlike. His actions were grandiose and dramatic, and the moment Techno left it had gone from *actual* torture, to more or less a child doing whatever he felt like.

**Eventually, Techno came back, and where Tommy thought he’d be amused, maybe even a bit proud, he just seemed annoyed. Almost immediately, he put Connor back in the tiny hole and filled it with water, shutting it tight and pinching the bridge of his nose.**

**Tommy moved to speak. “I-”**

**“Tommy all I asked of you was for you to not be annoyin’ for *one* day!” He reprimanded, shaking his head. Tommy shrunk away slightly, frowning deeply.**

Quackity narrowed his eyes at the screen.

“You don’t have to make him feel like shit, y’know,” he muttered, “he’s just trying to do good by you.”

“As if.” Techno snorted, rolling his eyes.

“No seriously, man!” The duck hybrid pressed, gesturing at the screen, “he’s following your lead! He’s trying to be like you!”

Tommy instantly went red, hiding his face in his hands.

“Would it kill you to be a little nicer?” Karl asked quietly.

**“It just might.” Was all Technoblade responded.**

**“No but-” he stammered, “I just-”**

**“Just stay out of the way,” Techno rolled his eyes, moving forward.**

**“Fucking Asshole.” Quackity mumbled, arms crossed.**

**Tommy watched, clenching his fists at his side. Why wasn’t Technoblade happy with him? Why wasn’t he doing enough? What did he need to do to make Techno proud?**

**So he was more violent. He was louder and angrier and he just hoped it would be enough for his older brother.**

**The room was completely silent, and no one knew what to say.**

**But it didn’t really matter, because only minutes later Ranboo reappeared with probably the worst news Tommy had ever heard.**

**Tubbo was willing to meet them.**

**“Well, that sounds great.” Techno huffed, dusting his shirt and moving to follow the enderman.**

**Once again, he was stopped by a tug on his cape, however that time it was much more forceful and firm. He turned, meeting Tommy’s wide and panicked eyes.**

***“Tubbo!?”* The blond whispered harshly, *“Tubbo’s here!?”***



Tommy grimaced at the tone in his voice, and Tubbo shot him a weary thumbs up.

**“Relax,” Techno murmured coolly, leaning closer, “just stick close to me.”**

Phil smiled.

**Tommy nodded mutely, swallowing back a lump in his throat and surging forward along with his brother.**

**“Oh thank god,” Connor let out a relieved sigh, moving closer towards Ranboo, “I’m saved.”**

**Ranboo almost instantly made a face, stepping back.**

**“Be quiet.” He said, turning on his heel.**

For a moment, the audience just stared in shock. And then;

“Ranboo?” Niki tilted her head, looking over.

The teen in question looked mortified, shoulders hiked up and tense. “I uh-”

“Of all people to be an asshole I did *not* expect it to be you,” Fundy said, grinning as though he was amused.

“Stop that,” Puffy chided, “it’s not funny. Don’t joke about what Connor’s going through here.”

Ranboo frowned, wringing his hands nervously.

**Tommy and Techno shared a confused look, almost laughing, but the enderman merely motioned for them to follow. They kept close behind Ranboo, but not too close that it was uncomfortable or unsafe.**

**As they walked, Connor made multiple attempts to get closer to him, but Ranboo would only turn and stare at him coldly.**

“Dude, *what* is up with you and Connor?” Sapnap asked, tilting his head.

“I don’t know,” Ranboo admitted quietly, tail flicking back and forth, “I just- I *hate* him.” He buried his face in his hands, and many people looked taken aback.

“I didn’t even know you were capable of hating someone.” George hummed.

“It’s not- I mean...” The enderman chewed on his lip anxiously, “I don’t know why I do, I just... do.” He looked down at the ground, “and I remember being so.. *annoyed* with him during all of this but I- but now watching it back I just feel like a jerk.”

“Well to be fair, you are being a pretty big jerk here so...” Technoblade trailed off.

“You are literally the one holding Connor hostage in the first place.” Tubbo replied, eyes narrowed.

**Tommy frowned, sticking dangerously close to his older brother, almost glued to Technoblade’s side. The piglin hybrid seemed slightly annoyed but didn’t move away.**

When they made their way to the clearing, however, Tommy stopped dead in his tracks, eyes widening.

Ranboo continued forward, back straight and chin high, making his way over to where the president of L'Manberg was standing quietly.

*Tubbo.*

Tommy's heart leapt into his throat and he held back an awkward gasp. His mind stuttered slightly, and he nearly tripped over the awkward bulky toes of his hand-me-down boots.

The brunette boy paused, eyes tired. He looked worn and weary, as if he was holding the weight of the world upon his shoulders. His suit was pressed and clean, perfectly creased and neat. His hair and nails were meticulously manicured.

Tommy knew what he himself looked like. His hair had been cut in uneven clumps to remove the blood and matts, and his clothes were torn and stained with blood that refused to wash out. (Technoblade had offered him a new wardrobe multiple times, but he just couldn't fathom it.) His face was mottled with scars and bruises, forearms were bandaged up and down to cover the ugly burns littering them. Many of his nails were chipped and bloody, dirt beneath them.

Tubbo looked *clean*, and Tommy felt so unbelievably dirty.

But neither of them looked happy.

"The moment we've all been waiting for." Fundy cheered, lacking enthusiasm.

"Shut the fuck up."

**Ranboo whispered something quietly in the president's ear, so quiet that not even Technoblade could pick up on it.**

**And that was when Tubbo's eyes zeroed in on the blond locks before him.**

**Almost instantly, he froze. He took an almost scared step back, pursing his lips. He stared at Tommy with wide eyes, a look of complete shock and horror upon his face.**

**"I can't believe it..." he whispered, "*you're alive!?*"**

Both teens winced.

Tubbo remembered how much that period of time had weighed heavy on him. He remembered planning the funeral and grieving.

*It was why he hadn't been able to grieve so heavily a second time.*

**Tommy couldn't help but flinch. The sound of Tubbo's voice was jarring beyond what he'd ever thought it could've been. For countless nights he'd cried himself to sleep begging to hear it just once more, but now that he was finally face to face with his friend, it was all too real.**

**"Hello Tubbo." He muttered, a pained smile on his face.**

**Tubbo looked as if he wanted to say more, stepping forward and opening his mouth, but was interrupted.**

**"Mr. President!" Connor cried, jolting Tommy from his daze. He'd forgotten the man was even there. "Oh thank god!"**

**“Connor,” Techno warned, “get back over here.”**

**Tommy looked over in surprise, not having noticed that Connor had even been slowly making his way over. Ranboo narrowed his eyes.**

**“Get back.” The enderman commanded, and Technoblade laughed loudly.**

**“Oh my *god*.” Puffy murmured, looking over at Ranboo.**

**The boy in question looked pained, staring with wide eyes.**

**“Even Ranboo doesn’t want you there!” He grinned.**

**Ranboo made a face, nodding. “Please.”**

**The enderman flinched.**

**Tommy paused, looking back over at Tubbo, who had been completely silent, staring at him. The tension hung heavy in the air.**

**“...Where have you been?” Tommy asked, voice just barely above a whisper.**

**Tubbo was quiet, and he looked around at the buildings surrounding them before his gaze landed back on the blond. “Here.”**

**Tommy frowned, clenching his fists. Techno’s presence was warm behind him.**

**“You exiled me.” He said, voice unwavering, “Do you remember that?”**

Tubbo frowned, fists clenching tightly.

Tommy looked violently uncomfortable.

**The president blanched slightly, eyes sad. He looked his former friend up and down, feeling bile rise in his throat.**

**“I-”**

**“Are you just going to chat or are you going to help me!?” Connor called out, startling Tommy. The blond gripped his sword slightly tighter, gritting his teeth and turning around. He jabbed the hilt of his weapon into Connor’s abdomen without hesitation.**

Phil reared back, eyes wide.

Many people seemed highly uncomfortable with the act.

**Technoblade smiled to himself as Ranboo stifled a laugh.**

Ranboo grimaced.

**Tubbo, however, stepped back at the action, blinking. He paused, brow furrowing as he then looked up at the piglin hybrid looming behind Tommy.**

**“What’s going on here?” He questioned, and Tommy couldn’t help but step closer to Technoblade; close enough that their sides were touching.**

Tommy shivered, as though he could still feel the warmth.

**“We’ve taken a hostage,” Techno grinned, gesturing back at Connor, “and we’re going to kill ConnorEatsPants if you don’t give me back at least *some* of my stuff, okay?”**

**For just a moment, Tommy looked scared. His eyes might’ve not been blue any longer, but they were somehow even sadder, and he looked at Tubbo and Ranboo with a tight feeling in his chest before swallowing the pain.**

Karl looked over sadly.

**“That’s right,” he affirmed, brandishing his sword and taking a step forward, “we’ll kill him.” He hoped no one else heard the wavering in his voice.**

**“Hold on,” Tubbo shook his head, matching Tommy’s advance, “Tommy, you’re with Technoblade?”**

“Yikes.” Jack muttered.

“That’s kinda awkward.” George hummed.

“Fuck off.” Tommy rolled his eyes.

**The two from the Arctic paused, looking at each other with wide eyes, as if they’d just realized their alliance. There was an uncomfortable silence for just a moment before Technoblade spoke up.**

**“Well... it’s uh- it’s a temporary alliance.” He shrugged.**

**“I am.” Tommy said simply, staring at Tubbo. “Cause you exiled me. You left me no choice.” He took a shuddering breath, “And you know what? He’s okay. Even after all the shit he pulled.”**

Tommy let out a low whine, cheeks going red. After Techno had basically claimed they weren’t even brothers, after Techno had done so much to them all on Doomsday, it was *humiliating* to hear himself say that.

He was such an idiot for thinking anyone could ever be trusted to stay at his side.

**Tubbo looked between the two, eyes wide and at a loss for words.**

**“I am great, that’s true.” Techno huffed out a quiet laugh.**

Quackity rolled his eyes.

**“You didn’t visit me.” Tommy said, eyes narrowed and fists clenched, “Not once! A-and you didn’t come to my party and-”**

**“I didn’t get an invite!” Tubbo tried, pleading.**

A few people winced, and Tommy looked ashamed.

“Sorry...” He muttered quietly.

**“*Don’t*,” Tommy seethed, “Don’t you say shit, okay? Dream told me. He told me everything. So I’m getting Techno’s weapons back and that’s *it*.”**



“Well...”

“Shut. Up.” Tommy said through gritted teeth, not looking back.

**Behind them, Connor began to cry softly, as if everything within the last few minutes had finally caught up with him. Ranboo glared at him, frowning.**

***“Stop crying.”* He whispered.**

“This is a fucking trainwreck.” Phil shook his head, looking pained.

Ranboo frowned sadly, looking guilty.

**Tommy paused, looking at Tubbo before looking over to his older brother.**

**“What do we do?” He asked simply, awaiting instruction.**

Sam’s heart clenched.

**Technoblade was happy to take the stage, stepping forward with a smirk upon his face. He towered over both teens, his large form casting a shadow over Tommy.**

**“We’ll be getting my weapons back. Specifically my trident,” he hummed, “and in return, we won’t kill Connor.”**

**“Yeah,” Tommy nodded, comically small at Techno’s side, “yeah you have his stuff!”**

**“Well I-”**

**“And didn’t you try to execute him?” He pressed further, narrowing his eyes.**

“What?” Sapnap tilted his head.

Quackity went pale.

**“Well....” Tubbo trailed off, sweating nervously. He turned his head just slightly, and that was when Tommy saw it.**

**The giant contraption in the sky, looming hundreds of blocks overhead.**

Technoblade tensed.

**“Look at that!” Technoblade gestured wildly, “They haven’t even taken it down yet!”**

**“Oh my *god!*” Tommy’s eyes widened almost comically as he gaped upwards. Without hesitation he took a significant step in front of his elder brother, holding his sword out.**

**“There was an anvil right up there,” Techno pointed to the top, “and they just *dropped* it.”**

“Tubbo you did that?” Karl inquired, leaning forward with wide eyes.

The boy in question shrank slightly in his seat. “Uh... yeah.”

“It wasn’t just Tubbo,” Ranboo shook his head, “there were four of us.”

Quackity’s eyes widened slightly.

“*You* were part of this?” George asked.

“It was me, Fundy, Tubbo and Quackity.” The enderman nodded, not noticing the looks he was receiving from the duck hybrid.

“...What?”

Ranboo looked up, noticing the stares Quackity was receiving from both his finances.

“I- I uh...”

“You *executed* someone?” Karl demanded.

“*Tried to*,” Techno corrected, “I didn’t actually die.”

Sapnap stared back at the piglin hybrid for a moment before staring back at Quackity.

“When?” He asked quietly, eyes sad.

Quackity frowned, swallowing thickly, “December...” He muttered. “But don’t be mad, okay? I didn’t- I just wanted Techno to *pay*! He hurt us and- and-”

“Quackity,” Sapnap interrupted firmly, “we aren’t mad.”

For a moment everyone was quiet. Most people were watching, afraid of speaking up. Techno made a face, as did Phil.

“You’re not?” The duck hybrid tilted his head.

“No, we just-” Karl reached out, placing a hand up and cupping Quackity’s cheek, his thumb running over the scar on his face, “god is this- is that how this happened?”

Quackity frowned, staring down at his hands in his lap as if he were ashamed, tears welling in his good eye. Sappnap and Karl alike were both already crying, staring sadly.

“Why didn’t you tell us?” Karl whispered hoarsely, choking on a sob.

The duck hybrid seemed to grow slightly angry at that, sneering and looking up to meet his fiancée’s gaze.

“Don’t act like you don’t keep things from me, either.” He muttered, tone bitter.

“What?” Karl blinked, taken aback.

“Don’t act like you and Sappnap and- and *George* didn’t fuck off to somewhere completely new and not even tell me where you went! Don’t act like you don’t disappear to places even Sappnap doesn’t know!” He seethed.

“Well, what about you?” Karl refuted, “You *left!* You disappeared and we didn’t know where to! You were always welcome in Kinoko Kingdom, you always have been! But you just- *you weren’t there!*”

*"Because I was doing it for you!"* Quackity screamed back angrily. He sighed heavily, slumping, "...It was always for you."

Sapnap frowned, tilting his head.

"...What?" He asked.

Quackity laughed bitterly, tears welling in his eye as he grinned, "Do you really think Las Nevadas was about me? It was about *us*." He stressed. "I did it for all of us."

Without warning, Karl rocketed forward, gathering him in his arms, and Sapnap rose from his seat, kneeling before them and placing a hand on both of their knees, crying quietly.

"I'm sorry," Karl murmured, burying his face in Quackity's hair, "I missed you so much."

"*We*." Sapnap butted in, raising a brow.

The time traveler laughed, moving to sit on the ground beside the blaze hybrid, and Quackity followed suit.

Sapnap wrapped both his arms around the two, smiling through his tears and resting his head on Quackity's shoulder.

"There's a room for you already, you know?" He muttered, nudging the duck hybrid.

"Yeah?" Quackity huffed out a laugh, leaning in closer, "That's cool and all.. but is there room in yours?"

Sapnap chuckled quietly, skin warm to the touch.

“Always.”

The others watched fondly.

“Are we supposed to just ignore the fact that Quackity tried to execute me?” Techno interrupted, raising a brow.

“Get fucked.” Quackity rolled his eyes, not turning to look. He didn’t move from his spot on the ground, despite his legs going numb.

Phil frowned.

**Tommy looked pained, swallowing back his anger and glaring at Tubbo fiercely. “What’s wrong with you?” He demanded.**

Tubbo winced, and Tommy looked at him sadly.

**Tubbo was quiet, staring solemnly, and a pang of guilt jolted through Tommy.**

**But then he looked up at his big brother, at the scar on his brow, and felt his heart sink.**

***Techno had almost died.***

Technoblade’s ear twitched at the look on Tommy’s face.

**The rest went on in a blur, and Tommy could barely shake his head from the haze. Vaguely, he registered Tubbo sending Ranboo off to retrieve some of the weapons.**

**“And while you’re at it,” Connor began, watching the enderman runoff, “can you call for some *actual fucking help!*?”**

**Ranboo paused, turning around and cocking his head. Connor shrunk back.**

**“Be. Quiet. *Please.*” The teen demanded, clearly quite annoyed and unimpressed, before continuing on his way.**

**“I don’t even know what to say at this point.” Sam commented, voice quiet.**

**Ranboo bit the inside of his cheek.**

**And Tommy stared. He watched as Ranboo left, and then he turned to stare at Tubbo. And the longer he stared, the more something twisted inside of him.**

**“You didn’t come and visit.” He whispered, “not even once.”**

**Tubbo made a face, as though slightly annoyed. “I did, actually. Twice.”**

**“Don’t lie to me,” Tommy shook his head, “Okay? We’ve been over this. Dream *told* me. I don’t want- I don’t want to hear your lies, Tubbo!”**

**“This sucks.” Fundy muttered.**

**Niki stared at the screen as if bored.**

**Tubbo's pleas fell on deaf ears, because at that moment all Tommy could think of was *Dream*. His heart hurt at even the idea, and he swallowed thickly.**

**He tuned out everything, concentrating on the memory of a little cold tent on a beach. It was stuck to his brain like a thick tar.**

**When he blinked back into awareness, he noticed a gentle tugging on his arm, and saw Technoblade with his back turned, clearly motioning that it was time to go.**

**A pit grew in Tommy's stomach, and he looked back over at Tubbo and Ranboo with wide eyes. Connor had disappeared at some point, but he couldn't fully recall.**

**"You... You've got your weapons?" He asked quietly, tilting his head.**

**Techno gave him an odd look.**

**"Yeah, some of them, now let's get going!" He ushered, pulling Tommy's arm again. The latter followed, slowly making his way up and over the snowy hill, but he couldn't help but pause. He couldn't help but look back.**

**Tubbo was staring at him, face unreadable. The elder teen was completely quiet, making no effort to follow, but no effort to turn and leave either.**

**Tubbo's heart clenched, and he remembered how much it had hurt walking away that day.**

**"Tommy." Techno urged again, tugging just slightly harder.**

**All at once, Tommy shook himself from his stupor, moving up the hill and following his older brother. He let out a loud cheer, feeling a burst of adrenaline surge through him.**



**“Let’s go!” He cheered, throwing his arms up in the air, “We won!”**

“I don’t think you *won* persay.” Puffy hummed.

“We got what we wanted, didn’t we?” Techno tilted his head.

**Technoblade shot him an amused look, and they continued on their way.**

**Tommy didn’t look back again.**

Tommy’s heart tugged slightly. He’d been so happy with himself after that, specifically because of how Techno had looked at him. His older brother had regarded him with *pride* ; and it had felt so special.

He scowled at the ground, digging his nails into his palms.

**The screen changed to a panned view of the portal just past the community house. Tommy and Techno, still dressed head to toe in armor, were loudly making their way toward it.**

**“That was crazy!” Tommy cheered, grinning wide, “I can’t remember the last time I *won* something, Techno!”**

Puffy smiled.

**“Yeah? Well get used to it,” Techno grinned, “Technoblade never loses.”**

**Tommy beamed up at him.**

Phil felt a warmth bloom in his chest.

**Then, of course, someone stepped through the portal.**

**Both of them stopped dead in their tracks, and Tommy's eyes went wide. He fumbled for his shield, bringing it up and brandishing his sword, gripping it so tightly his fingers were almost numb.**

**Dream stood before them, looming tall. His netherite gleamed in the sun, and his face was, as always, covered by his mask.**

The entire room tensed, and Tommy went very still.

The last time they'd seen Dream on the screen had been... well.

*"You lied to me, Tommy!" The masked man retaliated, "You lied!"*

*The blond continued to string along incomprehensible apologies as he followed Dream, babbling like a madman and begging for forgiveness. The smell of gunpowder hung low in the air, and Tommy was finding it hard to breathe.*

*Then, Dream put a pickaxe through Mushroom Henry's skull, and she fell to the ground with a thump.*

Tubbo gripped Ranboo's hand tight.

**Tommy's breath hitched, and he took a panicked step back, legs wobbling.**

**Technoblade steadied himself, pulling a regeneration pot from his inventory and frowning.**

**“Stay close to me, Tommy.” He ordered.**

Tommy frowned.

**The blond could do little more than nod shakily, eyes glassy.**

**“D-Dream?” He said, voice barely over a whisper.**

Quackity winced.

Tommy sounded so *scared*.

**The masked man’s head turned towards him and he took a step back as if on instinct.**

**“Hello,” Dream nodded, tone light and airy. Still, Tommy choked on a tiny gasp, flinching, “You’re not supposed to be here, Tommy.”**

“Fuck you fuck you fuck you fuck you...” Fundy continued to mutter quietly.

**Tommy’s eyes widened even further, and he readjusted his grip on his shield. “I...”**

**“I got back one of your discs.” The masked man said happily, as though it was a casual conversation, “from Skeppy.”**

**Technoblade looked down and over at his younger brother, noticing the way he shook.**

**“You’re lying.” Tommy shook his head.**

**“I’m not.” Dream rolled his eyes, amused. “I’ve really got it.”**

**“I can’t do this,” Sapnap whispered, “I feel sick.”**

**“*This* is what makes you feel sick?” Techno raised a brow.**

**“I’ve just-” Sapnap ran a hand through his hair, “I’ve just *had enough*.” He laughed breathlessly, tears gathering in his eyes.**

**The teen narrowed his eyes, taking a step closer to his brother. “You’re- You’re serious? You’ve got one?”**

**“Yes.” Dream stressed, tone a little bit more aggressive that time.**

**Tommy nearly jumped, looking up at Techno.**

**The piglin hybrid didn’t seem all that concerned by the conversation, but he was still on edge. Dream’s presence alone seemed to have him alert.**

**“Techno,” Tommy began quietly, leaning in, “Tubbo’s got the other one.”**

**“There are just two?” Techno replied, tilting his head.**

“Oh my god.” Ranboo commented.

“Not everyone knows every little thing about the discs,” Niki muttered.

“You’d *think* most people would at least know the *number* of discs that earned L’Manberg its freedom.” Tubbo hissed.

“Don’t need to know a country’s history if I’m just blowing it up.” Techno laughed.

Tommy scowled at him.

**Tommy shot him an annoyed look, nodding. “Yes,” he affirmed, “Cat and Mellohi. And once I have them back, everything bad will stop, okay? It’s like you said. I’m Mr. Problem.”**

**“That’s true...” Techno admitted.**

“It’s *not*,” Puffy shook her head, “it’s not.”

Jack raised a brow. “Well-”

“This doesn’t just apply to Tommy, Jack.” Puffy interrupted, “There can’t possibly be a single person responsible for *everything* wrong on a server. That’s not- that’s not how things work.”

Tommy didn’t look convinced.

**For a moment the three were quiet, merely staring at one another. Tommy looked at Dream, feeling nausea bubbling in his stomach and weak in the knees.**

**He was so *scared*.**

George bit the inside of his cheek.

**Still, he took a wobbly step forward.**

**“You fucked me over, Dream.” He narrowed his eyes, “You- Techno I-” he looked over at his brother, “Dream, you *manipulated* me.”**

“*Yes!*” Quackity cheered loudly, startling multiple people in the room, “*Let’s Go!*”

Tommy chuckled, eyes weary and grey.

**Dream was very quiet for what felt like eons, and Tommy braced himself for perhaps screams or explosions; because *oh my god he’d just stood up to Dream*,**

**But none of that came.**

**“Tommy,” The masked man began sadly, “I was the only one who visited you. I was the only person that was your friend.”**

Sam’s grip tightened around the armrests.

**“But you were terrible! You-”**

**“You betrayed *me!*” Dream all but laughed, “You came here, you’re not supposed to be here. You *left*. And now you’re here! And you’re causing problems!”**

Tubbo glared at the screen, looking over to see if Tommy was okay.

The younger teen was silent, looking down at the ground.

**Tommy shrunk back, flinching at the tone.**

**“As far as I heard, you had a *hostage!*”**

**The two brothers shared a glance at that, and a bit of the fear ebbed out of Tommy as he looked into Techno’s eyes.**

**“That’s true.” Technoblade shrugged.**

**“Yeah,” Tommy nodded, “but it was to get back my discs, so I can put an end to all of this, okay?” He looked back, staring at the server behind him. “And yeah, you were the only one that visited me. Cause you know what, Dream?”**

**“Tommy I-”**

**“I’m the only one that goes against you.” Tommy spat, “And you know what, Dream?” he cocked a brow, “I think you’re scared of me.”**

Phil grinned, a small spark of hope growing within him.

“I was prepared for the worst, but this is the best actually.” Fundy commented quietly.

Tommy shifted uncomfortably.

**Technoblade looked slightly taken aback for just a second, before a wide grin spread across his face. He nodded, as if proud.**

**The blond teen looked much more invigorated, a small and wobbly smile on his face.**

***He could do this.***

**“Alright,” Dream sighed, taking a step forward, “listen to me.”**

**Tubbo felt a small bit of fear grow within him.**

**Almost instantly, the ounce of confidence Tommy had went swirling down the drain; and he took a nervous step back, frowning deeply.**

**Techno raised his shield slightly.**

**“You’re going to come with me,” Dream said, tone unwavering.**

**Tommy’s face fell completely, eyes going wide. “*What?*” He whispered, shrinking in on himself.**

**“Or I’m going to burn your disc.” The masked man took another step closer, practically closing the gap.**

**The blond could barely hold back a whimper, panic going off in his head as Dream got closer and closer.**



Ranboo closed his eyes shut, tail furling around his leg tightly.

*No no no no no.*

The unknowing was the worst part; undoubtedly. Not knowing whether or not Tommy *had* gone back with Dream, even if maybe just for a few hours, made him feel sick.

Everyone in the room was quiet, frozen with fear.

***This was it. This was the end.***

**And then? A large figure forcibly placed itself between Tommy and Dream.**

**“Well that’s going to be a bit of a problem, Dream.”**

**Tommy looked up to see Technoblade standing before him, sword outstretched as if shielding him, and a large, uncontrollable smile spread across his face.**

***Technoblade was protecting him.***

**“Because this guy’s with me.”**

**“Oh.”**

**“What do you mean *oh*?”**

**Tommy could barely control himself, eyes wide with shock and glee because *someone* was protecting him from Dream.**

**The two adults were quiet for a moment, but Tommy was almost too happy to hear them.**

**“Are you sure about that, Techno?” Dream asked.**

Phil narrowed his eyes at the screen, wings hiked up high.

**“I am sure,” Technoblade nodded, and the grin on the teen’s face grew even wider, “this is a- a mutual partnership. So I can’t- I can’t really have you takin’ him away before I complete my objectives.”**

“That’s a really nice way to say ‘I’m using him’, jackass.” Quackity hissed.

**Tommy was all but giddy, nodding along happily. His hands were waving excitedly at his side, as if he couldn’t contain his excitement and joy.**

Puffy smiled along with him.

**“Unless, of course, you want to call in that favor.”**

**Instantly, the smile slipped from Tommy’s face, and he went dangerously pale. He looked up at Techno, and then to Dream who was standing just feet away.**

“What the fuck?” Tubbo blurted out, eye-widening.

**“What?” He all but whispered, panic rising in him.**

**Neither man said a word.**

**“What?” He pressed again.**

**“Don’t ask questions, Tommy.” Technoblade waved him off, “The adults are speaking.”**

“What The Fuck?” Tubbo repeated, squeezing Ranboo’s hand tight.

“What favor?” George asked, turning back.

“Dream helped me escape my execution,” Techno explained slowly, “I owe him.”

Tommy looked ill, quietly grinding his teeth together angrily.

“So you were- you were going to *let him* take Tommy?” Puffy demanded.

“I was bluffing.” Technoblade scoffed, “I knew he wouldn’t take me up on it.”

**Tommy went very pale, and looked back over at Dream; looked back over at the clean white mask and the little pinhole eyes and that *revolting* smile and felt bile rise in his throat.**

***I can’t go back to him,* he thought to himself, tears welling in his eyes.**

“Clearly Tommy wasn’t in on it.” Quackity sneered.

Tommy's cheeks went red, and he sunk lower into his seat.

*This was so humiliating.*

**“No,” Dream shook his head, “No, I think I have something else in mind for that...” he sounded... smug.**

**Tommy felt a pit in his stomach.**

“The fuck does that mean?” Fundy wondered aloud.

Even Technoblade didn't have an answer.

**Silently, Dream began to stalk off, gaze never leaving Tommy. “You live for now, Tommy.” He muttered, slinking away.**

“What the *fuck?*” Phil hissed, clenching his fists.

“I hate this,” Karl whispered quietly, “it's too much.”

**Tommy advanced on him, axe in hand.**

**“Yeah,” he nodded, “Yeah get the fuck out of here.”**

**Dream stared at him.**

**“Go. To. Hell.” He spat.**

**The screen went dark.**

For a moment they were all quiet.

“I mean at least it ended on a lighter note... right?” Tubbo tried, grinning awkwardly.

Tommy stared at him silently, face unreadable, before rolling his eyes.

“Lighter note?” He repeated, “Come on! That was *badass*! Did you not hear me tell him to go to hell?”

Tubbo laughed loudly, ignoring the dread pooling in his stomach. “Yeah, yeah...”

“Wins for Tommyinnit has officially gone up to one.” Karl beamed.

“I know you’re trying to be helpful but that makes me sound fuckin pathetic man.” Tommy muttered, “I *will* kill you Karl Jacobs.”

And as everyone chatted amicably, Tommy did everything within his power to keep his bravado up; screaming loudly, laughing even louder, and yelling profanities at anyone he felt deserved it.

But there were moments where his smile or sneer would slip. Moments where Karl would lean against Quackity’s side, or where Tubbo would playfully elbow Ranboo in the ribs, or perhaps where Niki would ask Jack to hold her hair tie for her and their hands would brush just barely against one another, and Tommy’s chest would *ache*.

Every time he saw it happen it felt as if the world was ending.

He wanted it *so* bad.

He wanted to be able to lean into touches and he wanted to be able to not flinch away or panic at the smallest gesture.

Tommy wanted to be *held*.

He stared quietly at where Quackity was kicking George's leg incessantly, George seeming to grow more annoyed by the second, and bit his tongue until he tasted metal.

He was pathetic, but every minute was closer to the end. Every minute they grew closer to escaping the wretched room. And, sure, everyone would inevitably leave him, that was a given, but at least he wouldn't have to sit and watch as everyone else got to be so *loved*.

He just had to wait it out.

# Break.

## Chapter Summary

Community house.

TRIGGER WARNINGS: abuse, slight blood

Phil was, for a better lack of words, in shock.

He could still remember the day that he'd been sitting in the meeting room; Niki and Techno flanked at his sides and Ranboo standing across from them all at the foot of the table.

*"Tommy's gone."*

The words themselves had basically gone in one ear and out the other. Tommy couldn't *die*. There was no warning, no build up. Phil hadn't even been there.

He was the Angel of Death, he *knew* when someone was about to die. He could *feel* it.

And he'd felt it on that wretched day he'd plunged a sword through his son's gut.

So of course, when he'd been delivered the news that his youngest was dead of all things, he'd brushed it off almost immediately.

There was just no way. Tommy would pop up again at some point, annoying and angry as ever, and it'd be okay; because even though Phil found him a handful and overbearing, that was still his son.

And his son wasn't dead.

Technoblade had scoffed as well, laughing quietly to himself before dismissing the topic entirely. Tommy dying just wasn't something feasible.

Of course, they'd been proven right when they'd clambered up that horrible little watchtower and seen the blond leaning against the railing, binoculars glued to his face and drowning in a maroon sweater much too big for him.

Or, Phil had *thought* they'd called Ranboo's bluff.

*"Tommy," Phil pressed, a sense of urgency in his tone, "what do you mean?"*

*"Ranboo already told you," Tommy rolled his eyes, smiling sadly, "you just didn't believe him."*

*Phil went very still, face going white. His eyes widened, and he looked his boy up and down, breathing shakily.*

*"No," he shook his head, "no because you're right here. Ranboo told us you died, Tommy! And you're here which means you're not dead! And that means that he was lying!"*

*"Oh yeah," Tommy laughed, shaking his head, "because Ranboo's definitely the kind of guy to do that," he looked his father in the eyes, making Phil seize up, "I died, Phil. It wasn't a fucking joke and it wasn't a fucking lie. I don't- I don't want to talk about it and you're making me talk about it but- but I was dead and Dream brought me back, okay?" He took a shaky breath, "Dream killed me and then used the revive book on me."*

Phil choked on a deep breath, bringing his shaky hands together and carding them through knotted hair.



Ever since his youngest had looked at him with greying eyes that used to be so *blue* and told him he'd *died* of all things, he hadn't been able to breathe properly. Nothing was coming out right, a deep and real pain buried deep in his chest and spreading quickly like a cancer.

Despite confirmation from both Ranboo, a boy he trusted so dearly, and Tommy, both his son and the victim himself, Phil still couldn't even bring himself to fathom the idea of it.

Tommy couldn't have died. That just wasn't right.

Phil looked over once more, studying the messy blond hair matted with grime and grit. He noted the hunch in Tommy's back and the tired slump, and felt bile in his throat.

*"Ranboo told us you died," Phil began, "Guess he was lying." The winged man huffed out a halfhearted laugh.*

A horrible pang went through him at the realization, and he keeled over, biting down a sob.

Tommy had *died*.

Phil still didn't want to believe it. He almost couldn't. Until he had something tangible, some *proof*- a body to identify even, he just couldn't believe it.

Losing a child was a parent's greatest fear. Phil had learned that the best way to overcome a fear was to face it head on. He'd lost countless children, however, and the fear remained; even stronger than before.

Had it really happened? Was it all some sort of an elaborate and sick joke? Some sort of payback for years of neglect?

He wasn't sure, but even as God's messenger himself, he shut his eyes tight and clasped his hands together, and prayed to all that was above that it was.

Beside him, his eldest was quiet, staring ahead.

Phil looked back up once again at his youngest rows ahead, silently brushing away his tears.

The screen started back up.

**It was late at night in the arctic. The shutters of the cottage had been shut tight, and the porch light had been shut off.**

**Tommy laid quietly on his side in his bed, the gold walls greying in the dark. The bell was still across from him, and he stared at it with tired eyes.**

Ranboo looked over, frowning at the blond beside him. His fingers itched at his side.

***“Unless, of course, you want to call in that favour.”***

Tommy flinched, grimacing slightly.

Phil sucked in a sharp breath.

***Instantly, the smile slipped from Tommy’s face, and he went dangerously pale. He looked up at Techno, and then to Dream who was standing just feet away.***

**He grit his teeth, tensing and turning onto his back, staring up at the stone ceiling. He tried to ignore the tears building in his eyes.**

Sam’s eyes narrowed.

**“Techno wouldn’t do that to me.” He murmured quietly to himself, frowning deeply. “I-I’m safe here.”**

Puffy bit the inside of her cheek, closing her eyes.

***Techno spat out a tooth, red eyes amused. Tommy was glaring harshly at him.***

***Unfortunately, the piglin hybrid got the best of him just moments later, slamming him up against the wall. Tommy couldn’t escape his grasp, fighting and thrashing in vain.***

Tubbo looked away, scowling.

***Techno raised his fist,***

**Tommy choked on a gasp, eyes widening as he rocketed into a sitting position. He hunched over, breathing heavily.**

George frowned, shifting uncomfortably.

**He gripped the bedsheets across his lap tightly, knuckles going white.**

***Tommy stared at the podium in shock, mouth agape. There was a yellow concrete box before the microphone. It was splattered with blood and gunpowder. Technoblade stood before it, firework launcher in hand. He too was covered head to toe in blood.***

Tubbo turned his head sharply away once more, and Tommy winced. Ranboo placed a tentative hand on his husband’s shoulder, making Tommy’s gut churn.

**He bit back a whine, tensing even further and placing his head atop his knees.**

**“I can’t do this.” He all but whispered, “I...”**

Phil wiped hastily at his eyes.

***“You want to be a hero, Tommy?” Techno cocked his head, red eyes glowing.***

***“Then die like one!”***

Sapnap glared harshly at the screen.

Technoblade was completely silent and still, watching intently.

**Tommy grimaced angrily, throwing the sheets from the bed and leaping to his feet. He pawed incessantly at the tears in his eyes, gritting his teeth.**

**He made his way to the ladder, desperately climbing and running until he was at the front of the house, throwing the door open and running into the snowy yard barefoot. The door was left ajar behind him, but he couldn’t find it in him to care, collapsing into the snow face-up.**

**He breathed heavily, panting as he stared up at the stars and the slush began to soak through his clothes. His tears began to freeze.**

**“Dude.” Karl commented quietly.**

**“It’s cathartic.” Tommy bit back.**

“It’s self-harm.” Fundy scoffed, rolling his eyes.

Tommy tensed, not replying.

**“I don’t know what I’m doing.” He whispered up at the cosmos, arms outstretched and palms facing upwards.**

Quackity frowned.

**The stars, of course, did not answer him; and he was left lying in the silence, shivering quietly.**

**Tommy wasn’t sure how long he was there, laying in the snow with no shoes and damp clothes, but eventually, there was a prodding at his side.**

**He pried one eye open, not sure when he’d even closed them, and noticed Technoblade dressed clumsily in his large cloak, hair disheveled, standing over him.**

The piglin hybrid was silent.

**A pang went through his chest.**

***He was outside in the rain, soaked to the bone, laying in the grass. Wilbur was nudging him in the ribs with the toe of his boot, hands shoved into the pockets of his trenchcoat, looking down with a monotone expression.***

Niki schooled her features, remaining expressionless, but her grip on the armrests was a dead indicator of how the sight made her feel.

**Tommy smiled wearily.**

**“Sup?” He saluted, eyes red-rimmed. His fingers were numb, nose and cheeks rosy.**

**“The Hell are you doin’ Tommy?” Technoblade demanded, raising a brow, “Didn’t I *just* nurse you back to health?”**

Technoblade remembered thinking the whole ordeal was an annoying inconvenience.

He wasn’t sure how he felt about it anymore.

**Tommy’s smile faltered slightly at that, and he sighed.**

**“Yeah...” He looked off to the side, a frown tugging at his lips.**

Phil’s feathers ruffled slightly.

**They stood in silence for a moment, frost nipping at Tommy’s skin.**

**“Are you coming inside?” Technoblade cocked a brow, nodding back at the lodge.**

**“I guess.” The blond muttered, not making eye contact.**

**The screen went dark.**

“You’re such a fucking dick.” Quackity hissed quietly, narrowing his eye at the piglin hybrid.

Technoblade tilted his head, unimpressed.

“Look,” he began with a sigh, “I’m not an overly emotional person, okay? I don’t get all *weird* about things. And I was *clearly* bluffin’ about the favour!”

“Well then maybe you should have clarified that.” Tommy muttered angrily, arms crossed.

“You really couldn’t tell?”

Tommy whirled around to glare at his older brother. “Well, let’s see. I’d just come out of exile and I thought everyone was out to get me because you *told* me they were, and I just wanted someone to order me around like Dream or Wilbur, and you always made such a big deal of telling me how temporary our alliance was and how you didn’t actually care, so *yeah*, I couldn’t tell.” He snarled, baring his teeth before sitting down with a huff.

Technoblade didn’t speak, staring at Tommy quietly.

“Well, I’m gonna be honest, that just doesn’t sound like a- like a, a *me* issue, y’know?” He shrugged, “like there’s nothin *I* could have done.”

Quackity opened his mouth to refute, and quite angrily by the look of it, but was interrupted.

“Whatever,” Tommy rolled his eyes, “I don’t fuckin care anymore, man.”

No one bothered to speak after that, going back to watching.

**Tommy and Techno paraded across the Prime Path, The sun was high in the sky; clouds were sparse.**

**“Remind me why we’re doing this again?” The blond asked, looking back at his older brother, “Cause- cause I’ve had people messing with my head before, yeah?” He tapped at his temple, “I try and fight the ghosts but I always lose.”**

**“Do you think before you speak?” Ranboo tilted his head, curious.**

**“My genius needs to be unfiltered.” Tommy shrugged.**

**For a moment, Technoblade only stared at him.**

**“...What?”**

**“Nevermind,” Tommy shook his head, grumbling quietly, “it’s- just explain what the fuck we’re doing.”**

**Near the back of the room, Fundy grew tense.**

**They made it to the edge of the upper portion of the path, peering down at the grassy entrance of New L’Manberg. Fundy and Ranboo were ambling around quietly, chatting to themselves.**

**“We’re doing this to get my weapons back, just like last time.” Technoblade told him sternly.**

**Tommy paled.**



**“Right,” Tommy nodded firmly, “and that’ll get the discs back. Yup.”**

**His older brother didn’t speak, shuffling around within his inventory. Tommy peered over the edge, staring at Ranboo and Fundy.**

Tubbo perked up at the sight of the enderman, grinning slightly.

Ranboo, however, looked unenthused.

**“Here’s the plan,” Techno informed him quietly, “We go in there, threaten them with a couple of Withers, and we’ll be out quicker than we came in.”**

Puffy narrowed her eyes, and Sam scowled at the screen.

**“Right,” Tommy repeated, nodding once more. “Easy Peasy.”**

**Technoblade rolled his eyes.**

**Without much more discussion, they descended upon the two unsuspecting figures below. Tommy landed with a huff, grinning silently to himself. Fundy and Ranboo alike startled back, eyes going wide.**

Fundy grimaced, sinking down further in his chair.

**“Party’s over motherfuckers!” Tommy cheered loudly, pumping a fist in the air.**

Sapnap let out an amused huff.

The rest of the conversation carried out in a bit of a blur for him. Something about threats and Withers and weapons; he wasn't really sure. The two they were threatening looked highly on edge, backing away.

Occasionally, Tommy would impose with a loud hurrah or a reiteration of what Techno had already said.

And then?

There was a fucking *Wither* being spawned.

"You've got to be *fucking* kidding me," Quackity began, voice dangerously low. Tommy tried not to flinch; tried to assure himself that the anger was mostly directed at Technoblade.

"Wait!" Tommy cried out, reaching over to intercept Technoblade's view of the soul sand, "This is- this is a little *too* far... don't you think?"

"You think?" Jack muttered.

Tommy frowned, wringing his hands together.

His older brother scoffed, pushing him to the side.

"A bit of minor terrorism is *necessary*, Tommy. That's how we get results." He informed the teen, continuing on his way.

"Withers aren't *minor*, Technoblade." Tubbo retaliated, shoulders hiked up.

"Just one is."

**Behind him, Ranboo was scrambling off in a hurry and Fundy was watching in horror.**

**In the blink of an eye, Tommy was staring up at a Wither in the sky with wide eyes.**

**“What the *fuck!*?” He shrieked, looking back in a panic at the maniacal glee on Technoblade’s face. “Techno what are you doing!?”**

“Good to see you still have *some* common sense left in you.” Niki commented.

“Hey now,” Tommy laughed nervously, sweating and trying to cover it up, “I’m made of nothing *but* common sense lady.”

Niki didn’t seem very amused.

**The Wither gathered its bearings for just a moment, coming into awareness and looking down at them all. Tommy gazed into the hollow dark eyes and felt a pit in his stomach.**

***Technoblade whirled around, placing the skulls as people surged forwards, but it was too late. Withers were born, taking to the skies.***

“Wonderful to see you’ve left a permanent scar on your brother’s psyche...” Sam muttered bitterly to himself.

“Hm?” Phil tilted his head, imploring for the man to repeat himself.

“It’s nothing.” Sam smiled back.

**Fundy screamed in terror, ducking away in a mad dash, frantically trying to put on his armor.**

**Technoblade laughed loudly, grinning wide.**

“You’re a fucking sadist.” Fundy bit out, trying to keep himself in check.

“Maybe,” Technoblade shrugged, “but at least I’m fair.”

Quackity’s eyes widened, and he whirled around in his seat, ready to refute, but was cut off by the screen continuing.

***“Oh god Oh god Oh god Oh-”* Fundy shielded himself from the fire of the monster, running to a new place for cover.**

Niki frowned.

**“Techno this is too much!” Tommy cried loudly over the explosions, brows pinched together painfully, *“Stop it!”***

Puffy looked back sympathetically at the blond.

**“I can’t stop it, Tommy,” Technoblade rolled his eyes, amused, “at least, not until I get my sword back!”**

George made a face.

**Tommy stared at him with wide eyes, taking a step back. The blond looked back over at the Wither, at Fundy trying desperately to keep it at bay, and swallowed thickly.**

They watched as the wither was finally slain, and they watched as both Tommy and Techno laughed at Ranboo and Fundy. They watched as Tommy hesitated for just a moment with each action before following through with an exaggerated enthusiasm.

They watched as Fundy stumbled and stuttered over his words, as Technoblade claimed *he* needed the nether star.

They watched as Tommy and Techno cornered Fundy.

**“Tommy,” Techno urged, “Tommy let’s have a chat over here.”**

**Fundy trembled in the opposite corner, watching them wearily.**

**Ranboo stared from the entrance, quiet with wide eyes.**

Both Tommy and Ranboo alike looked as though they were about to be sick.

Fundy was completely still in the back.

**“Do you think violence is the answer, Tommy?” Technoblade asked quietly, grinning at the younger, “Should we stab him a couple of times?”**

*“What!?”* Puffy all but shrieked, craning her neck so she could get in a wide-eyed look at the piglin.

**“Ranboo...” Fundy whispered quietly, nervous.**

**The enderman didn't move to help.**

“I am so *so* sorry Fundy I-”

“Save it.” Fundy snapped, cutting Ranboo off.

The others looked confused.

**“I reckon violence is the way to go.” Tommy agreed. He turned towards his nephew, crossbow in hand, and shot at him. The arrow ricocheted off the netherite with ease.**

Tommy cringed, looking away.

**Both Tommy and Techno closed in on the fox, weapons in hands.**

“Wait,” Fundy began, eyes wide, “*wait wait wait wait-*”

**Tommy paused, halting abruptly and placing a hand before Techno.**

**“Wait.” He commanded, taking a hesitant step closer. He raised his axe in the air. “Does this do a lot of damage?”**

**The axe blade clanged loudly against Fundy's netherite armour, and the man in question flinched back into the wall.**

**“*Yes!*” Fundy shrieked, eyes wide.**

**Tommy raised the axe again, swinging down a second time before he could stop himself.**

“Tommy!” Phil scolded, affronted.

His son didn’t look at him, staring pointedly at the carpeted ground.

**Techno advanced, narrowing his eyes.**

**“I don’t have it,” Fundy shook his head, “it’s in my ender chest *please!*”**

“Fundy...” Niki began, chest feeling tight at the sight of the man in peril.

**“You have it.” Technoblade scoffed, unenthused.**

**“Fundy,” Tommy grinned, “take off your armour.”**

**The fox hybrid paused, looking up at the two. He smiled wearily. “Would you like some ice cream?” He offered.**

Quackity tried to hold back his anger towards Tommy, he did, but watching the events unfold was making him a weaker man by the second.

Tubbo looked pained.

**“Fundy,” Technoblade sighed, placing an ender chest, “I have an ender chest right here.” He looked up at the fox, “Now what do you think would happen if you continued to... y’know... not listen?”**

**The room was very quiet for a moment, and Fundy looked around nervously. Tommy had his crossbow out, aimed for his nephew. Ranboo was staring quietly.**

It was... odd; to see Ranboo merely standing around. Somewhere in their minds, the general public had painted him as someone a bit more heroic. They'd assumed he'd step in if ever he thought something was going too far.

The truth was that he was spineless.

Ranboo clenched his fists tightly, frowning deeply.

**"Uhhh..."**

**"I'd kill you," Techno hummed, "I'd kill Ranboo," he nodded thoughtfully, "I'd kill everyone."**

**"Wait," Ranboo interjected, narrowing his eyes, "What'd I do? I'm just standing here!"**

"We can see that." Fundy snarked, but there was a tremor in his tone and his leg was bouncing up and down.

Karl frowned, looking back at him sadly.

**The piglin hybrid didn't answer, merely gripping his sword a bit tighter.**

**"Look Fundy," Tommy began, "I'm actually quite a fan of L'Manberg, y'know? I don't *fully* want to be doing this..." He trailed off, "But if it gets back the discs then, well, it gets back the discs."**



“You’re not doing yourself any favors by opening your mouth.” Sapnap muttered, some of the distaste he’d had for Tommy, in the beginning, making a reappearance.

“You’re really quite condescending in moments like this.” George hummed. He didn’t seem very disturbed, but George was generally speaking a very disconnected man.

Tommy bit the inside of his cheek, not saying a word.

**Technoblade cheered at that, patting Tommy on the back and grinning as the teen beamed up at him, eyes wide with admiration.**

Sam felt something ugly bloom in his chest at that.

**The next two to three minutes were a jumble of threats and swears, and mostly just the two brothers screaming at Fundy.**

**“It’s here! I have it, it’s here!” The fox cried, shaking with wide eyes. He had the nether star in his trembling hand as Ranboo watched the entire ordeal quietly. “Just promise you won’t kill me!”**

Tubbo scowled at the screen, a sort of disappointment towards himself of all people rearing its head.

He should have been there to protect his citizens.

Of course, he was more upset with Technoblade and Tommy than anyone. That was a given.

**“We won’t!” Tommy shook his head, “but Fundy,” he neared closer, crossbow still in hand, “tell me where the discs are.”**

**For just a moment his nephew blinked, taken aback and confused, before cowering away.**

**“I... I don’t know.” He managed softly.**

**“Just tell me,” Tommy smiled gently, “who do you *think* has the discs? Where do you *think* they might be?”**

“Fuck you.” Fundy spat icily, curling in on himself. He remembered how scared he’d been in that moment; how his *uncles* had tormented him.

“I’m sorry, Fundy,” Tommy whispered, “I really am I... I should have said it so much sooner.”

“You’re just saying that because you’re being forced to watch it back.” The fox hybrid rolled his eyes, “I don’t want your fake apology.”

**“I don’t know,” Fundy repeated, “I don’t.”**

**Tommy sighed, running a hand through his unruly hair. He looked tired.**

**“Look,” He began, “Techno got his things back-”**

**“Actually I’m still missing my triden-”**

**“-and now I need *my* things back, okay?” He urged, “I need the discs. I love L’Manberg even *more* than you do, so this really hurts me to do, but I *need* those discs.”**

“Oh wow,” Quackity blinked, eyes wide, “that’s a fucked up thing to say.”

Tommy swallowed back bile.

**“I really don’t know where they are,” Fundy shook his head, “honestly!”**

**“When’s the next time everyone’s going to be together?” Tommy implored.**

***“I don’t know!”***

***“When’s the next time everyone’s going to be together, Fundy!?”*** Tommy all but screamed back.

Fundy flinched at the cry, and Phil looked over at him, face impassive.

Puffy craned her neck to look at the blond teen eyebrows creased together. Tommy felt a jolt of terror run through him as he realized *Puffy was mad at him*.

“I...” He began quietly, his mouth dry, “I don’t...” He trailed off awkwardly, balling his hands into fists and gritting his teeth.

**“I’m sorry!” Fundy pleaded, cowering behind his arms for protection, tears building in his eyes.**

**Tommy was stopped by a hand on his shoulder, guiding him back. He looked up at his older brother with wide eyes.**

**“Go easy on him, Tommy,” Technoblade told him gently, “he’s upset.”**

**“Don’t act like you’re any better.” Quackity hissed.**

And once again, it surprised Tommy. Even when Quackity was mad at him, he’d still stand up for him; loud and clear for everyone to hear with no strings attached, no guilt hanging over his head.

It confused Tommy, but it made him feel warm at the same time.

**The blond looked back at the fox in the corner and frowned. He looked back at the piglin, confused.**

**“Fundy,” he sighed, running a hand over his face and trying to ignore the sobs, “is there any time everyone’s going to be together? Cause we need that.”**

**He received nothing but more cries.**

**“Fundy,” he said again, “Fundy it’s okay,” he smiled, “speak to me, I won’t hurt you.”**

“You’re not gonna get anywhere now that you’ve done all that to him, Dumbass.” Subpoena snorted.

**“I’m sorry...” Fundy sniffled, shoulders shaking as tears ran down his face, “I don’t know.”**

**Tommy paused and he frowned at the other man. He reached up, pulling off his helmet and setting it aside.**

**“Look at me, Fundy,” He tried, “It’s okay.”**

**After just a few more minutes, they ended up with the newfound knowledge of a festival the next day, and quickly departed, but not before Tommy had pulled Ranboo to the side and apologized.**

**“That went so well!” Tommy beamed, bouncing happily as the two walked down the Prime Path under the sun. “Did I- Do you think I went too far?” He cocked his head to the side, looking over curiously.**

“You seriously didn’t know?” Tubbo raised a brow, unconvinced.

“I thought I was helping Techno...” Tommy managed, hunched in on himself.

**“I think you might’ve gone a little too far,” Technoblade admitted, not turning to look at him.**

**“Why?” Tommy frowned, furrowing his brow, “I don’t- I got us *info*, Techno! I *helped!*”**

“Tommy...”

“I know,” The teen snapped, “I can see now that it was bad. I know.”

Fundy frowned.

**They continued on their way, the blond speeding his pace as if he’d grown slightly more unnerved.**

**“I mean... That’s true.” Techno nodded, “Just give me back my axe.”**

**“What? Can I not keep it?” Tommy asked, as though hurt.**

**“I made you a sword, Tommy.” His older brother reminded him, looking rather annoyed.**

**The younger nodded quickly, swallowing back something and hurriedly dropping the axe on the ground, as if it burned him.**

**They continued on in silence for a few more minutes before Tommy turned to his brother once more.**

**“Did I really go too far?” He asked, frowning deeply, “I- I thought I did right.”**

Fundy stared down the blond with a scrutinizing gaze.

“You really did do it for him, didn’t you?” He huffed out a laugh. “I went through all of that because- because you wanted to make your big brother proud?”

“I’m sorry, Fundy.” Tommy repeated, looking pained.

*“Why?”*

“Because I hurt you.” He admitted, “Because I hurt you in a- in an attempt to make him like me more.” He shook his head, smiling bitterly, “And I am *so* fucking sorry, okay? There’s nothing I can do to make up for it or excuse it. I was *horrible* to you. I- I pushed you down to try and pull myself up.”

Fundy didn’t answer, but he was silent, swallowing thickly and looking back at the screen.

**Technoblade was quiet for a moment as he walked.**

**“Well,” he began, “if you want to make an omelette, you’re gonna have to break a few eggs.” He shrugged.**

“You can’t encourage that behaviour,” Puffy said sternly, “Tommy was being more violent *because* of you. If you thought it was too far then you stick to that.”

“I’m not his teacher,” Technoblade snorted, “Sure he went a bit haywire but we got results, didn’t we?”

Tommy shut his eyes tightly, trying to think of anything else. He dug his nails into his palms, gritting his teeth.

*“You make me hate myself, Tommy.”*

**Tommy, who had previously been all but wilting at the thought of upsetting his brother, instantly sprung back to life, smiling wide.**

**“Yeah!” he cheered, “eggs, bitch!”**

“You’re- you’re making him *worse!*” Puffy all but sputtered, “He’s impressionable and vulnerable here!” She gestured to the screen, “You can’t give him affirmations for negative behaviour! All he *wants* is your affirmation!”

Tommy scowled, sinking lower in his seat. He wasn’t five for fuck’s sake. He made his own decisions.

**Technoblade gave him an odd but slightly amused look.**

**“I finally feel like we’re on the same page,” Tommy grinned, relaxing, “I mean- It finally feels like we’re also doing something that benefits *me* as well!”**

*Oh.*

Ranboo looked over wearily at the blond.

*All he’d wanted was to be Techno’s equal.*

**He stumbled slightly, his too-large boots scraping across the wood as he all but bounced up and down. He hadn’t felt so alive or affirmed in ages.**

**“What should we do next?” He asked, looking around excitedly, “destroy that tower? *Oh!* We could blow up the Community House! *I love terrorism!*” He cheered. The two of them entered the old building as he did, shifting oddly on the crafting table floors.**

Instantly, the room froze.

Tommy blanched, turning to look back at the room with wide eyes.

“Fellas...” He began awkwardly.

“It *was* you?” Sapnap whispered, horrified.

“*No!*” Tommy all but shrieked, frantically shaking his head, “God no!”

“And we’re just supposed to believe you?” Jack raised a brow, “I mean antagonizing and harassing Fundy wasn’t too much for you, why is destroying a building much different?”



“Because I *didn't*.” The teen stressed, looking pained, “I- I- Dream admitted to it! He said it himself! He did it!”

The others were quiet.

Tommy looked to his left for reassurance but found even Tubbo looking at him with an odd expression.

“Drista,” He whispered shakily, “Drista tell them *please*.”

There was a brief pause, and then a somewhat familiar voice boomed overhead.

“Tommy didn’t do it.” Was all she said.

Niki scoffed incredulously, looking up at the ceiling, “And we’re just supposed to take your word for it? You’re his *friend*. You’ve trapped us in here just to watch ‘The Tommy Show’ and we’re supposed to just believe you?”

“I’m not biased,” Drista snapped back, “use your brain and think back to minutes ago and what you were watching. I include important moments. If he’d done it I would’ve shown it. Now shut up and keep watching.”

“Tommy,” Technoblade instructed, “calm down.”

**The blond paused, leaning against the railing of the pathway above the water. He tilted his head to the side, smiling happily as his hair flopped along with him.**

**“Let’s take things one at a time,” his brother told him, fishing a little black book out of his pocket absentmindedly, “first we destroy L’manberg-”**

**Tommy's face fell almost instantly, brows furrowing.**

**“-and then we-”**

**“Why would we destroy L'Manberg?” He asked, shoulders tensing if only by a small amount. “What? No no no... L'Manbergs not... I'm just getting back my discs.”**

**“Yikes...” George muttered.**

**For a moment Technoblade was quiet, and he looked almost regretful of what he'd just done. He frowned, posture dropping with a sigh as he looked down at the book once more.**

**“Right...” He muttered, “Right, right, right...”**

**“Well, that can definitely mean only good things.” Fundy quipped wearily, trying to make up for his outburst earlier.**

**Tommy swallowed nervously, taking a cautious step back, and the elder would be lying if he said he wasn't at least somewhat hurt.**

**“I think it's finally time I tell you the truth, Tommy,” He began, “You see, I haven't been completely honest with you.”**

**“Shocker.” Quackity rolled his eyes.**

**Technoblade glared.**

**Overhead the skies darkened, and the scars running up and down Tommy's arms began to sting. He stared up at his brother with a deep frown.**

**"When I first met you," Technoblade began, and for some reason, the tone did nothing to ease the dread pooling in Tommy's stomach, "You were uh- you were just like- living in the floorboards like a raccoon..." He trailed off momentarily, smirking just slightly to himself, "And I'm gonna be honest Tommy, I didn't really respect you back then."**

"What the hell is wrong with you?" Tubbo demanded, turning around to stare at the piglin, "Do you- Do you even care about *anything*!?"

"Of course I do." Technoblade scoffed.

"Well, obviously Tommy isn't one of those things." Ranboo mumbled quietly to himself. Beside him, Tommy inhaled sharply at the words and he turned in a panic to apologize, but Tommy shooed him away.

**Tommy tried not to flinch at the words; tried not to take another step back, but he knew the look on his face alone was indication enough that the comment had been like a slap to the face.**

**"You were kinda useless, loud... *annoying*. "**

Tubbo closed his eyes, taking a deep breath and trying to calm himself.

*You don't call him that. You don't ever call him that.*

**The blond grit his teeth.**

**"At first I was just stringing you along to achieve my own ends... but uh- now that we've committed all this terrorism together, I'm starting to think you might not be**

**completely useless.”**

“How kind of you.” Sam hummed sarcastically.

Phil was completely silent, and had been for a very long time. He hardly reacted to anything happening around him.

**Tommy bit the inside of his cheek, looking rather perturbed. Overhead thunder rumbled in the sky, and small droplets of rain began to fall sparsely.**

**“I mean like- maybe not like *above average*, but at least average on the usefulness scale.” Technoblade continued before the latter could reply, barreling through the conversation, “What I’m trying to say, Tommy, is that I think it’s about time I told you that my real plan,” he took a step closer, “my *real* plan, is to *destroy* L’manberg, alright?”**

“Do you always have to talk down to him?” Karl frowned, “I don’t... It just feels *wrong*.”

“And what a surprise, you were just using him.” Quackity gasped sarcastically.

**In the distance, lightning struck, and the rain began to fall harder. The water beneath them seemed to grow angrier and more agitated, crashing against the wooden pathway.**

**For some reason, the words made Tommy lose all air in his lungs.**

**“I am going to leave it a chunk error, I am not going to rest until that entire country has been obliterated for what it did to *me* and *Phil* , alright Tommy?” Technoblade said, taking another step closer.**

“When you say what L’Manberg did to you, are you talking about... the retribution in regards to what you did to *us*?” Tubbo demanded, eyes narrowed.

“You all treated me like *garbage* in Pogtopia, alright?” Techno bit back, “You used me. The withers were retribution for that. We were even.”

“Oh, *sorry* we used you, it wasn’t like you presented yourself as an ally who only wanted to be used.” Quackity hissed, “Your whole deal is talking about no fucking strings attached, okay? You knew how much we all loved that country, you knew we had plans to love it again.”

**He was met with silence as Tommy swallowed back the bile in his throat, turning to look back at the faint lines of L’Manberg over the horizon. He clenched his fists, but when he turned back around, Technoblade seemed to tower over him. The last time he had felt so small was back in the pit.**

**“And I think you should join me.”**

**Tommy was pale, hands clammy at his sides and brows pinched together painfully. He was shivering, soaked to the bone; his hair plastered to his face.**

**“I’m telling you this because I actually have the *slightest* trace of respect for you, okay? Maybe not as equals, but y’know I think you’re worth being honest with, Tommy.” Technoblade leaned in, “Because L’Manberg? They’ve screwed you over too, Tommy. They exiled you, they abandoned you...” He paused, looking over the horizon similar to how Tommy had, his own red eyes lacking the fondness the blond’s blue ones had held, “L’Manberg is the source of all your problems, and that’s why we need to get rid of it.”**

“L’Manberg didn’t do *shit*, bitch!” Tubbo hissed, “If you’re going to play the- the exile card then go knocking at Dream’s door; *not* ours.”

He was uncomfortable bringing up exile so casually, the wound still fresh in all their minds, but his own anger was bubbling up inside of him.

“And you need to cut the ‘better than you’ shit right fucking now.” Puffy said, barely keeping herself in check, “Tommy has done *nothing* but be good to you in these past weeks on the screen, okay? He helped you get your weapons back because he wanted you to *help* him too. And you don’t even fucking respect him because, what, he’s still recovering from exile? Because he’s ‘useless’?”

“I feel like I’m being targeted,” Technoblade hummed, arms crossed, “Who’s to say any of you wouldn’t have acted the same in my position?”

“Okay, granted, yeah, we’re being harsh, but there’s a reason, dude,” Sapnap raised a brow, “you can’t just- you can’t just *say* that to Tommy when he- he *wanted you to like him!*”

Tommy whined quietly to himself, sinking down further in his seat as his face flushed.

*This was humiliating.*

“I did like him!” Techno tried.

“Then you should’ve acted like it, asshole!” Quackity snapped at him. “You can’t fucking call someone useless and annoying and tell them you don’t even respect them as an equal and expect anything other than a slap in the face, okay?”

“Everyone shut the fuck up.” Tommy muttered, face buried in his hands, “*Please.*”

**“I don’t...” Tommy trailed off awkwardly, frowning deeply.**

**“I’m not saying everyone in L’Manberg is a bad person,” Technoblade admitted, “y’know Tubbo... he might be a nice guy, but the problem is that power corrupts.”**

**The teen looked down at the ground, completely silent.**

**“Don’t you see what Tubbo’s done ever since he became president?” The piglin implored, “He’s cast you aside. He’s abandoned his friends.”**

Tubbo narrowed his eyes, shifting uncomfortably. Ranboo grabbed his hand, offering him a reassuring smile.

**Tommy choked back a strangled whine, looking close to tears.**

**“And maybe he thinks he’s doing it for good, but do you think exiling you was a good idea?” Technoblade asked quietly, looking over at the blond. “Do you think that was worth it?”**

“You don’t get to weaponize exile,” Sam said quietly, “none of us do.”

Tommy frowned.

**Thunder crashed loudly above them, and something in Tommy grew stronger at that, as if the wind and the water alike were surging him forward.**

**“Technoblade,” He began, face set in stone, “L’Manberg is my unfinished symphony, and once I get back the discs it’ll be finished, alright? The melody will be over.”**

Niki sucked in a sharp breath at the words, eyes going wide.

“Your unfinished symphony...” Tubbo murmured, looking over. Tommy offered him a tired smile.

He didn’t have anything left to say about L’Manberg.

**Images of Wilbur flashed in his mind. Images of him and Tubbo sitting on the bench and listening to the discs passed by in a blur.**

***“Both my discs, you can have them.”***

**Wilbur’s smile was beginning to grow fuzzy in his memory.**

***“It’s for L’Manberg.”***

**The scar just above his heart began to ache.**

***It wasn’t a perfect moment; L’Manberg was still in need of reparations, and he’d just come back from death twice. Eret had left them in the dust, and he’d lost his discs.***

***But in those minutes it all felt okay.***

***With the lanterns glowing and the cheers of his comrades, he felt like everything was all okay.***

**“Or it could be over when I blow it up,” Techno interjected, shrugging.**

**“Oh my god...” Fundy muttered, “You are such an ass sometimes.”**

**“No, he’s a pig.” Ranboo said quietly, and Tommy erupted into loud laughter.**

**The peace was broken by the words, and Tommy looked as though he was going to be sick.**



**“No,” he shook his head, “No! The only thing that’s stopping everything from being peaceful is just getting back the discs!”**

“It’s sad that you really think that.” Niki commented, “They’re just discs, Tommy. They can’t stop wars *or* start them. Only you can.”

Tommy didn’t answer, staring at her with a furrowed brow.

**His brother was quiet for a moment, the two of them being pelted by the rain.**

**“Tommy I’m going to be real with you,” Techno began, as though he was growing bored, “I’m blowing it up no matter what, alright? That country is already dead in my eyes. I’m just telling you this now because I’m giving you a chance to join me for real.”**

“You need a serious psychological evaluation.” George said point blank, staring back at the man.

Tommy and Quackity alike laughed loudly at that, while Technoblade merely made a face.

**Another loud clap of thunder shook the foundations of the earth and the piglin hybrid squinted up at the sky. Wordlessly, he made his way towards the canopy of the Community House’s entrance, stopping beneath it and looking back.**

Tommy didn’t follow, fists clenched at his side. He watched Technoblade go with gritted teeth, remaining where he was in the pouring rain. He shivered violently, sopping wet and freezing with chattering teeth, but still made no effort to seek shelter.

**“Why have you only just now gained respect for me?” He managed hoarsely, hugging himself tightly.**

Puffy frowned at the screen, heart twisting in her chest.

**“Well, y’know,” his brother shrugged, “because now you’ve actually stood up to Dream, you’ve actually like committed some terrorism...” His ears flicked slightly, “I’m gonna be honest Tommy you were kinda useless and annoying when I first met you.”**

“You said that already.” Tubbo said through grit teeth.

**Tommy stared at him, face void of emotion.**

**“But now, you’ve actually been doing things.” Technoblade grinned, “The violence, the terrorism? You might go a little far sometimes but you could actually be useful.”**

**The two were quiet for a moment, and the elder tilted his head to the side.**

**“You could actually be... a *friend*.” He admitted gruffly.**

**And it was as if everything he’d said to upset the younger flew out the window at that. Tommy’s eyes widened, features softening.**

**“You know that’s all I’ve ever wanted.” He whispered quietly. “You- you remember back when we were kids and- Technoblade that’s all I’ve ever wanted!”**

“No!” Quackity all but cried, pulling at his hair, “Tommy no! You- You deserve so much better than this! Don’t you remember what he *just* said to you!?”

“It doesn’t matter,” Tommy quipped back, “I don’t care what he thinks of me, I... I just want to hear him say something, *anything* like friends or- or broth-” He shut his mouth instantly, face going almost comically red.

Phil stiffened just barely in the back row, and Technoblade pursed his lips.

**“The choice is yours.” The piglin smiled to himself. “But I’m just being upfront with you. No lies, no deception. I am going to destroy L’Manberg.”**

**Tommy paused, looking down at the ground and nodding.**

**“I understand if you don’t want to take part in it,” Techno continued, “I’ll do it myself, alright? You don’t have to help me, but it *is* in your best interest.”**

“Fuck you.” Fundy said plainly, barely even realizing he’d said it himself.

**Lightning struck base just dozens of feet away, and Tommy’s eyes flitted over for just a moment, but he tore himself away from the distraction. He looked sickly and pale in the low lighting; skies dark and crying.**

**“Technoblade,” he began softly, “I will join you.”**

Tubbo tilted his head, furrowing a brow.

Tommy cringed, looking away.

**Almost instantly, the man in question began to ramble excitedly, completely ignoring that Tommy had more to say.**

**“...but just to get the discs.”**

“That’s not... I don’t think that’s how that works.” Jack muttered, looking almost physically pained by the confusion.

**Technoblade halted in his hurrah, quirking a brow. “What?” He demanded.**

**“It’s Tubbo’s home. It’s my home... It’s not finished, it’s not ready to go.” Tommy told him quietly. Perhaps in reality, *he* was what wasn’t ready to go.**

**Or maybe the two of them were intangible; Maybe Tommy couldn’t be separated from L’Manberg.**

**“It’s going either way, Tommy.” Technoblade sighed.**

Tommy looked down at the ground, frowning. He knew in advance and he *still* hadn’t managed to save it.

**The blond bit the inside of his cheek, quiet for just a split second as he furrowed his brow. He hugged himself slightly tighter.**

**“Please just... At least can we get the discs first?” He murmured, downtrodden. “Can you promise me that?”**

**“Uh... No.” Techno said simply, “no.”**

**“Oh I get it,” Karl nodded, “so basically he joins you and gets nothing.”**

**“He gets his discs.” Technoblade raised a brow.**

**“And loses his home in the process.” Sam pointed out.**

**Tommy hesitated at that, not having been expecting such a blunt answer.**

**“I’ll help you get the discs back,” his brother offered, “but that country is going down the second I get a chance.”**

**The Redstone in the community house flickered for just a moment as Tommy looked up at his big brother, a deep frown on his face.**

**“Fine,” he gave in with a sigh, “fine.”**

**The screen went dark.**

**“You shouldn’t have settled, Tommy.” Sam said quietly, “There were other people who were willing to help you.”**

*Me. I was. I would have given you food and shelter, hell I would have built you a mansion if you’d have just come to me instead. I wouldn’t have made you feel bad about any of it. You would have been safe with me.*

**Tommy glared sharply at him.**

**“Well gee, thanks Sam! I’ll just go back in time and find my past self and tell him that!” He chirped sarcastically, smiling bitterly.**

**“That’s not what I…” Sam trailed off, Tommy was already engrossed in another conversation, pointedly ignoring him. He couldn’t help the painful twist he felt in his chest.**

**That night, Tommy found himself outside once more. Draped in one of Techno’s large capes and wearing his oversized boots, he cleared off a patch of snow from a large rock and sat down upon it, staring up at the moon.**

“At least you’re properly dressed this time.” Puffy commented.

**The stars were bright, shining down on him.**

**They felt like friends.**

**“Am I doing the right thing?” He asked them quietly, shivering to himself. His nose was runny and red, cheeks rosy as his breaths puffed out into little bursts of fog. His knuckles turned white as he gripped the velvet cape tighter.**

*Oh.*

For some reason that took the air from Sam’s lungs, and he couldn’t help but look over at the young blond, the *teenager* who was curled up in his chair and who looked so *disgusted* by his past self.

**“I think I am.” He said, looking down at his feet, “I don’t- I don’t feel *good* doing it but this has to be the right thing... doesn’t it?”**

“You should always trust your gut, Tommy.” Sapnap said, shaking his head.

Tommy didn’t know why, but those words had him thinking back to the Nether.

**Of course, the stars had no answer for him. They merely twinkled in the sky, and Tommy just barely caught a glimpse of one going out.**

**“You’ve been dead for years, haven’t you?” He whispered to the star, smiling softly, “but I’m only just seeing that now.” He chuckled lowly, kicking at some of the snow on the ground, “Your light went out long before any of us could see, mhm?”**

“I don’t think I like this.” Fundy said, making a face.

Tommy scowled, crossing his arms.

**He sighed, sniffing and wiping at his nose with his forearm.**

**“I’m doing the right thing.” He told himself, voice just barely above a whisper, “I have to be.”**

“Tommy...”

“Shut the fuck up.”

**That morning, when Technoblade grinned at him and asked if he was ready, he grinned eagerly back. He was ready.**

**They packed their things, ready to take on the world. With pockets full of potions and his brother at his side, Tommy felt unstoppable.**

**And then? Dream began to build obsidian walls around L’Manberg.**

“Oh,” Quackity *“Oh.* We’re at this point.”

**Tommy watched from his spot on the ledge, completely invisible with Technoblade beside him, trying to keep his hands from trembling.**

**He couldn't for the life of him understand why Dream would be building the dreaded walls again. He was *gone*. L'Manberg should have been safe from Dream.**

**Almost instantly, the cabinet appeared. The group of four rushed down the path with wide eyes, staring up at the obsidian.**

**"What's going on?" Tubbo demanded, neatly dressed in his firmly pressed suit, "What's all of this?"**

"Haven't seen myself in a while." Tubbo hummed, looking at the screen.

**Dream paused, looking up at them and unsheathing his sword.**

**"Tommy fucked up." He said, dangerously low.**

The words alone sent shivers up many of their spines.

A violent rage he didn't think he was even capable of passed through Ranboo and he shuddered, looking over at Tommy worriedly.

**The four blinked, confused. Tubbo cocked a brow, tilting his head.**

**"What'd he do?" He asked.**

**"What does Tommy have to do with any of this?" Fundy questioned, "What are you talking about?"**

**Dream laughed loudly, throwing his head back, but he silenced his laughter almost in an instant. Despite the mask covering his face, the anger rolling off of him was**



**unmistakable.**

Tommy cringed, unable to hide how the laugh made his skin crawl. Puffy looked back at him, smiling and offering a thumbs up.

**“You’re trying to tell me you don’t know what he did?” He demanded, laughing incredulously, “You can’t be serious!”**

**“We are!” Quackity pressed, hands itching at his side.**

**“Tommy’s gone! He’s exiled!” Tubbo cried, “We don’t know anything!”**

**“That’s an understatement.” Fundy muttered.**

**Dream sighed, looking down and shaking his head.**

**“Follow me,” he commanded, turning on his heel. The four followed suit.**

**Tommy looked down as his communicator buzzed, and waited until the others had curved around the bend to pull it out.**

**Technoblade:**

**What did you do?**

**Tommyinnit:**

**UHH**

**Technoblade:**

**Follow my boots.**

“Why would you just say uhhhh.” Karl asked, unable to keep the amused expression from his face.

“I was panicking!” Tommy hissed, cheeks reddening.

**He looked over to see the grass folding where something invisible was stepping on it and quickly made his way over. He trailed behind his brother nervously, staying far back from the group.**

**Tommy wracked his mind, trying to think of something he might’ve done that incited a reaction that grand, but he couldn’t. Further down the path, he heard the group exclaim loudly.**

**And then it came into view.**

**The entire Community House had been destroyed. Blown to just about pieces and flooded. Tommy froze, eyes widening in horror.**

“Well...” Tubbo began quietly, “At least we know it wasn't you!” He chirped optimistically.

**“Tommy did this?” Tubbo asked quietly, and the blond in question froze in place.**

“Oh fuck me.”

**“I don’t- I don’t understand...” Fundy trailed off, staring at the desecrated building.**

Dream slammed his hand against what remained of the brick, shoulders tense. The others backed away, and Tommy felt Technoblade place a hand on his shoulder and pull him back from where they were spying.

“We were *this* close to peace!” The masked man cried, “We were so close! I trusted you guys!”

“You’re the one who blew it up, fuckhead!” Quackity cried at the screen.

Tommy laughed at that, despite his nerves.

Almost instantly, Tubbo grew defensive. His chest puffed out, shoulders squaring up as he took a step forward.

“We had *nothing* to do with this.” He insisted, the others chiming in desperate words of agreement.

Technoblade:

DID U BLOW IT UP ?

Tommyinnit

No hahah

“That’s very convincing.” Jack commented sarcastically, raising a brow.

Tommy blushed even harder that time, covering his ears to hide their redness.

“I was under *duress*, Jack Manifold.” He snapped back.

**The sight of his brother using all caps made Tommy wince, and he quickly looked up with shaking hands to see how the conversation down below would continue.**

**“It’s because you still have his disc, Tubbo!” Dream said sternly. “You’re still affiliated with him! That is his most prized possession!”**

“What the hell kind of logic even is this?” George made a face.

**Tommy slowly crept nearer, frowning deeply.**

**Technoblade:**

**Be careful. People are walking by.**

**This is bad.**

**“This was the oldest building on the server!” Dream cried, gesturing towards the rubble.**

***“He was supposed to stay away!”* Fundy yelled back, nearly shaking with panic. “He was exiled!”**

Fundy cringed looking over at where Tommy was staring at him.

“Call it even?” He grinned.

Immediately, the blond began to laugh. “I think what I did was worse, Fundy.” He grinned.

**Tommyinnit:**

**Mhm**

**“This isn’t our fault,” Quackity insisted, “this isn’t on us.”**

**More and more people were arriving to look over the damages, and Tommy just barely avoided running into Badboyhalo and Punz.**

**Technoblade:**

**Did you really not do this**

**“This is what needs to happen, okay?” Dream began, pacing quietly as his netherite boots made quiet splashes in the low water, “He needs to pay. He cannot go unpunished. This is the *worst* event that has ever happened on this server.”**

**“The worse event to ever happen on this server was exile you fucking *asshole!*” Quackity cried, removing one of his shoes and throwing it at the screen.**

**“Please don’t throw things at my screen.” Drista told him sternly.**

**Technoblade:**

**TOMMY THIS IS BAD**

**Tommyinnit:**

**YES I KNOW**

**Tommy neared even closer, peering through the water falling from the rafters to get a peek at the others inside.**

**“I can’t believe he would do this…” Tubbo murmured.**

**The younger teen took a shaky breath, trying desperately not to make a sound as he crawled up the side of the building, feet scraping against the brick.**

Tommy suddenly found himself thankful for the fact that the others were attempting to keep the mood relaxed and light. He wasn’t sure if he was going to be able to handle much more, but the stupid jokes and gestures were keeping him sane.

Whether or not they were helping him on purpose, well, he was pretty sure they weren’t, but he’d take whatever he could get.

**“Aren’t you supposed to be the one that’s watching him?” Ranboo demanded, and it sent a jolt through Tommy’s spine so hard he almost lost his footing.**

**The others around the enderman nodded, coming together.**

**“You’re supposed to be enforcing his exile, Dream.” Tubbo told him, “This isn’t on us.”**

Tubbo looked over and blinked in surprise when he saw Tommy staring at him. “What?” He asked, tilting his head.

“Normally this is where you’d go ‘I mean to be fair’.” Tommy shrugged.

A smile tugged at the older teen’s lips.

He was glad Tommy seemed to be holding it together; perhaps even actually doing better.

**Tommy backed away, scaling back down the side and crouching by the entrance as he pulled out his communicator.**

**Tommyinnit:**

**I took another invis**

**“I can’t enforce his exile without the disc,” Dream sighed angrily, “I need both!”**

**“He seemed to be doing just fine at it before.” Technoblade scoffed.**

**The blond teen lurched at that, feeling sick to his stomach as he processed the words. He couldn’t stand the thought of the same hands that had so brutally beat him holding onto his discs.**

**“The disc needs to be handed over and burned.” Punz spoke up, looking down on them all from above, “Right now.”**

**“This isn’t our fault!” Fundy cried, “This is Tommy’s fault!”**

**Tommy tried not to take it personally, but something sickly that he’d been forcibly ignoring was trying desperately to rear its ugly head.**

**The boy in question was near shaking, nearing even closer; so close that it was dangerous. He’d lost track of where Technoblade was.**

**“Then just give me the stupid disc.” Dream said, a smile in his tone. “I need it.”**

**And despite knowing how stupid it was, how much Technoblade would berate him for it, how *scared* he was, Tommy jumped into the fray.**

**“No!” He cried out, making his presence known as the effects of the invisibility wore off. He stood before them all, axe in his trembling hand.**

“I remember you scared the shit out of me there,” Tubbo hummed, expecting Tommy to laugh like just minutes before.

The blond let out a half-hearted huff, nodding quietly.

Tubbo frowned, sharing a concerned glance with his husband.

**They stared at him as if they’d never seen a creature so hideous, all of them completely horrified.**

**“Tommy?” Tubbo called, eyes wide.**

**Before he could respond, before he could even look to Tubbo, Dream intervened.**

**“Tommy look, you fucked up, okay?” The masked man told him.**

*Stay the fuck away from him,* Puffy thought quietly, clenching her fists.

**Around them, the people stared, most of them completely silent and from above. Tommy could barely keep his teeth from chattering as he stood in the destruction with all eyes on him.**

**“Dream,” He smiled, laughing nervously, “Dream, does this look like something I’d do?” He asked innocently, smiling sweetly and sweating bullets.**



“It’s kind of impressive just how- how *normal* you manage to act even under incredible amounts of stress and fear.” Ranboo noted.

“Everything about me is impressive.” Tommy muttered, leg bouncing up and down.

Something was *wrong*. He couldn’t keep it together for much longer.

**The members of the server looked around at the ruin. They looked at the place they’d first known and then at the boy they’d always known so well for destroying the things people loved.**

**Almost instantly, there was an enthusiastic chorus of people agreeing that *yes, it did look like something he’d do.***

**Tommy grimaced, trying to wave them off and ignoring the growing pit in his stomach.**

**“Guys,” A voice he knew all too well began, “Tommy didn’t do this, okay? He didn’t.”**

**He felt the presence behind him before it was even there. Technoblade was standing guard behind him, sword in hand and fully dressed in netherite.**

“See?” Technoblade gestured towards the screen, “I might’ve- I might’ve made *some* mistakes here and there, but I stood up for him when it mattered!”

“There wasn’t a moment where it *didn’t* matter.” Sam muttered.

**As the people around them erupted into panicked whispers at the sight of the anarchist, Techno tried to calm the crowd.**

**“I know Tommy can’t be trusted by many, but he wouldn’t lie to me, okay?” He told them all sternly, staring them down.**

**Tommy felt a warmth bloom in his chest, and though he continued to ramble in a panicked sort of state, he took a step closer to the man.**

**“He lied about George’s house.” Dream pointed out, unimpressed.**

**“Well of course he’d lie to *you*.” Techno scoffed, taking a step forward, “but he wouldn’t lie to me.”**

Tommy swallowed back bile in the back of his throat, staring at the past version of himself. He dug his nails into his palms, drawing the smallest amount of blood.

**Dream stepped off the ledge he’d been standing on, getting uncomfortably close to the two. Tommy failed to suppress a flinch, stepping behind Techno.**

**“I don’t think this involves you.” The masked man said, clearly upset.**

**“I didn’t *want* to be involved, okay?” The piglin narrowed his eyes, “but Tommy ran in!”**

**And then Tubbo stepped forward, not in netherite but in plain diamond. His eyes were... hurt. They were mad. He stared at Tommy, and the latter realized the anger was directed at *him*.**

*Oh god, Tubbo thought quietly, I don’t want to watch this*

**“I mean,” the president began, “you being here kind of proves Dream’s point, doesn’t it? You did this. You’re not where you’re supposed to be.”**

Tubbo's eyes widened almost instantly, and he looked over apologetically.

"I..."

"I know." Tommy assured him, "I know."

Tommy stared at the wooden floors soaked and ruined with water, and then up at the people above them.

"Hold on," Technoblade interjected, "you're accusing him of crimes, and then saying that him defending himself is what makes him guilty?" He demanded.

"He's not even supposed to be here!" Dream barreled through angrily.

And Tommy realized, not for the first time, that Dream had been right. Back in exile when he'd told him how unwanted he was. How he only caused problems.

It was true.

"So Tubbo," The masked man grinned, "give me the disc."

And Tommy watched with wide eyes as Tubbo turned to the ender chest placed beside him. He watched as *Tubbo*, his best friend in the entire world, didn't even *hesitate* to comply. He watched as Tubbo so eagerly moved to give the disc to *Dream*, the man who had ruined him.

"*No!*" He shrieked, surging forward and pushing the older teen back. "You're not serious, are you?"

Tubbo winced and Ranboo looked uncomfortable to be between the two once again.

Tommy was stark white, hands and whole body basically trembling.

**Tubbo glared angrily at him, pulling up his shield defensively as the others backed away.**

**“You’ve literally proven time and time again that you can’t be trusted!” He cried loudly, practically seething.**

**At those words, Tommy faltered.**

**“What?” He paused, lowering his guard, “No, Tubbo *No*. You already exiled me, but if you give Dream the disc it’s over, okay? We can take him down together and you and I can go back.”**

**Tubbo was completely quiet, looking him up and down as if regarding a stranger. He took a step back, shaking his head.**

**“I don’t think that’s an option anymore.” The president frowned.**

**“It is,” Tubbo managed hoarsely, “it always was.”**

Tommy didn’t answer, too sucked into what was happening on the screen.

**Around them, the people were silent, and Tommy could all but feel Dream breathing down his neck. He prayed for his adrenaline to stay, lest he fall to his knees at the sheer exhaustion of being near the older man.**

**And something inside of him snapped. Every memory of explosions on a desolate beach, of nights curled up in a stark white tent falling asleep with the fear that he'd freeze to death overnight, of Dream *hitting him* and *kicking him* came flooding back at once.**

**He felt Dream's presence behind him and looked forwards at Tubbo who was inches away from the ender chest, glaring at him.**

**"Tubbo," He began, "You spent all this time... Made all these speeches about how I'm a bad friend, how I was the one being reckless and going out and doing things, a-and being bad but, you won't even stick up for me right at my lowest point!" He shook his head, tears building in his eyes, "Do you know what he did to me in exile Tubbo? You don't!"**

A collective wave of both anger and sympathy washed over the people watching, and Tubbo pushed back tears.

"I'm sorry," He insisted, "I didn't know."

"None of you knew." Tommy snorted.

**"I thought you were *dead!*" Tubbo cried angrily.**

**"But you didn't come and see me." Tommy laughed bitterly, "And you still don't care that I'm here... You know what? *You're* the shit friend Tubbo."**

Tommy sucked in a sharp breath, making a pained noise, and Tubbo turned to him almost instantly.

"It's okay," he affirmed, "we're past this, We didn't mean it. We didn't know."

**A dark look overtook the president's features, and he grit his teeth. He surged forward and wordlessly shoved Tommy back, glaring.**

**"This has your name written all over it!" He screamed.**

It wasn't worth apologizing for, seeing as things were going to get even worse, but Tubbo felt the need to anyway.

**"It wasn't me!" Tommy pleaded, "E-Even though it would've been funny-"**

**"This is exactly how you acted when you burned down George's house!" Tubbo insisted, taking another step forward.**

**No one else dared speak, watching in complete silence.**

**"I don't need to prove myself to you!" The blond cried, "For once in your life just *trust me!*"**

Tommy sank lower into his seat, looking pained.

The entirety of the remainder of the room was dead silent, watching intently.

**Vaguely, he was aware of Techno standing behind him, a sort of comforting presence. A single ally.**

**Tubbo laughed at that. He threw his head back and laughed, shaking his head.**

**"I did trust you," he muttered, "once. The *first* time all of this happened! And I won't make the same mistake twice."**

Mistake.

Tommy knew Tubbo hadn't meant it. He knew neither of them had meant almost anything they'd said there on that platform, but it didn't stop the stinging.

He took a shaky breath.

**Dream seemed to be all but glowing, silently basking in the light, happy as could be. Tubbo wordlessly turned back towards the ender chest, opening it and looking inside.**

**"Don't you dare." Tommy warned, taking a hesitant step forward.**

**The president didn't even look up at him, slowly reaching down and plucking the music disc from its confines. He gripped it tightly in his hand; so hard Tommy was worried it might break.**

**"Tubbo, you betrayed me!" He cried, surging forward, "You know that right?"**

**The president took a step backward and Tommy caught a glimpse of something behind his shield.**

***"Did you just pull out your axe!?"* He all but shrieked, jumping back. He grabbed his own, gripping onto the handle for dear life as he stared at his friend in horror.**

Tubbo cringed, squirming in his seat. He hated how offended Tommy sounded.

**"I didn't betray you!" Tubbo denied, shaking his head, " *You* betrayed everything you'd built!"**

Tommy froze, looking down at the axe in the elder teen's hand. He brought his own axe up to his face, holding it in place.

"Tommy," Technoblade called from behind him, crossbow drawn and ready to aim, "there's like thirty people here," he laughed, "whatever you decide, Tommy. Make that decision wisely."

Without another word, Tommy raised his axe and swung it at Tubbo.

"Oh god."

Instantly, the two devolved into a senseless fight, swinging their weapons using nothing but raw anger and hurt to drive them.

"You betrayed me, Tubbo!" The blond cried, just barely blocking a blow.

Above them, Technoblade tackled quite literally everyone else. Trying his best to merely keep defenses up until Tommy was finished.

"That is just *not* true!" The president yelled, swinging once more and landing a hit on Tommy's left.

Puffy watched with a sad face. All she could think of in that moment was that they were *children*. They'd been forced apart so many times, pushed to lengths so many others wouldn't've come back from, and yet still managed to find each other again each time.

"*This is what Wilbur wanted!*" Tommy hissed, "He wanted you to betray everyone! He wanted you to forget what was right!"



**Tubbo ducked beneath the Axe of Peace, swiftly following with a knee to Tommy's middle, sending the boy stumbling back.**

***"I didn't betray everyone, *you did!*"***

**Dream stood completely still to the side, head lazily moving back and forth as he watched the two fight. His arms were crossed behind his back, posture ramrod straight.**

Anger surged throughout Sapnap's entire body at the sight.

***"You left me to die!"*** Tommy shrieked, wiping blood from his brow.

Tubbo hadn't understood what Tommy had meant back then, but after witnessing it firsthand, he understood completely; and it made him feel sick to his stomach.

Tommy seemed to be staring intently at the version of himself on the screen.

***"You teamed up with the very man who blew up our nation!"*** Tubbo retaliated, standing tall.

**Tommy stood on shaky legs, holding his shield close to his body, tears streaming down his face.**

***"I did it for the discs! The discs, Tubbo-"***

***"You-"***

***"The discs were worth more than you ever were!"***

Tommy let out a strangled noise at that, and Tubbo leaned over to tell him it was okay only to freeze when he saw the blond.

The younger was hunched in on himself, eyes red-rimmed and glazed over, looking absolutely *ruined* as he stared at himself.

**And just like that, time stood still.**

All the others cringed.

**Instantly, both boys froze.**

**Tubbo reeled back at the words, stumbling for the first time and barely catching himself. He brought his shield even closer, staring silently.**

**Tommy went still, as if freezing in place. His eyes widened, and he looked up at Tubbo in horror.**

**Above them, everyone paused, looking down in shock. There were a few sparse muffled gasps, but they all stopped, watching the two teens with complete vigilance.**

**Tommy looked up at the people watching them, and then back and Tubbo; *Tubbo*, his best friend. Tubbo, who he'd just said something he could never take back to.**

*It's not fair,* Ranboo thought to himself, feeling a stinging in his eyes, *why them?*

Both Tubbo and Tommy alike were the kindest people he knew. Of course, in different ways, but kind all the same.

They were everything Ranboo cared about, and watching them fight on the screen felt like he was being doused in cold water.

**The axe fell from his hand, hitting the ground with a heavy thump, and his shield came moments later. His fingers itched, twitching at his sides.**

**Tears welled in his eyes, and he looked at where Tubbo was still staring at him.**

“Tommy...” Sam began quietly.

**He took a shaky breath, closing his eyes for just a moment.**

**“Give him the disc.” He murmured softly, frowning deeply.**

And they all knew how it went from there. They knew that Dream would swoop in, that he’d berate Tubbo; call him an idiot.

It felt odd to watch a moment they knew so well, and something that hadn’t been very long ago.

**Tubbo hesitated, giving him a confused glance.**

**“You want me to... to give Dream the disc?” He repeated, as if it had been spoken in another language.**

**Tommy was hyper-aware of the green figure behind him, watching him. It made his skin crawl, and he wanted nothing more than to take the disc and go running; to never look back.**

**“Give him the disc.” He affirmed quietly, completely defeated.**

**Tubbo blinked, taken aback. “I...”**

Tommy grit his teeth, digging his nails into his palms, fists shaking with how hard he had them clenched.

**Dream stepped forward at that, practically glowing with glee. He snaked his way over to Tubbo, holding out a hand.**

**“He knows he has to pay,” He cooed, looking over in Tommy’s direction, “he realizes that he’s fucked up.”**

George glared at the screen.

**Tommy didn’t reply, staring sadly at Tubbo. “I’m sorry.” He whispered.**

**“I’m sorry.” The president mirrored, and Tommy shook his head.**

**“No,” he denied, *you shouldn’t apologize*, “just give him the disc, okay?”**

**Tubbo nodded, turning to face the server admin. Wordlessly, he held out the disc, and Dream gleefully plucked it from his hand and placed it in the ender chest.**

**All around him, Tommy heard the confused murmurs; the sounds of people who never in their lives imagined they’d see the day.**

Tubbo cringed as he watched his past self.

*I should have just fucking listened to Tommy.*

**“Tommy...” Technoblade began wearily, “You really just uh- you upped the difficulty by a *lot*, Tommy.” He laughed quietly to himself.**

**The boy in question wasn’t listening, however, and instead looked up once more at all the faces looking down on him. He sighed, running a hand through his hair and pushing back tears.**

**“Techno I... This isn’t me. This isn’t...” He paused, swallowing back a sob, “I mean, I look around and I’m not the person I want to be.”**

Tommy bit the inside of his cheek, holding back a frustrated whine as tears pricked at his eyes.

Everyone else seemed to grow sad at the words, as if they’d never heard him say them the first time around.

**His older brother went rigid at that, quirking a brow.**

**“Tommy,” he began, “what’re you saying?”**

**The blond turned away, looking at Tubbo once more with eyes glossed over and a pit in his stomach.**

***“I’m so sorry.”* He said once more.**

**“Tommy we could get out of here,” Technoblade offered, hopeful, “we could pearl out. I’d cover your escape, Tommy.”**

**“Technoblade,” Tommy cut in, growing paler by the second, “if this is the person I’ve become, then I don’t want to be me anymore.”**

**He moved to stand closer to Tubbo, hugging himself tightly and staring down at the ground.**

**“Tommy?” His brother called after him.**

**“I’m with Tubbo.”**

**The screen went dark.**

“You don’t have to apologize, Tommy.” Puffy told him quietly, “You didn’t do anything wrong there, okay?”

“He quite literally betrayed me and left me to face *everyone* on my own.” Technoblade snarked, raising a brow.

“He realized he was becoming someone he didn’t like,” Puffy interjected, “and he stopped in his tracks and decided he wanted to change. I don’t think you realize how difficult that is. He-”

She was cut off by a muffled sob from behind her- *directly behind her* - and instantly swiveled around.

Tommy was completely curled in on himself, hands clamped tightly over his mouth in a desperate attempt to silence his cries.

The entire room went still.

“Tommy?” Puffy whispered, “Tommy what’s wrong?”

The blond didn’t reply, merely shaking his head and holding his hands even tighter. His body shook with sobs, wracking his entire frame.

Most of them could only stare in shock.

Tommy had finally cracked.

“Tommy,” Ranboo began quietly, turning just slightly, “it’s okay.” He tried. He was smiling gently, but he was fucking terrified.

*“It’s not!”* Tommy cried, shaking his head as tears ran down his face, *“It’s not! It’s not!”*

Quackity watched with wide eyes, and he felt Karl grab his hand. The latter was shaking.

“What’s wrong Tommy?” Ranboo murmured, “We’re right here, okay? Everything’s okay I promise.”

*“It isn’t,”* Tommy sniffled, eyes red-rimmed and puffy, “I don’t- I can’t- I-”

“Shhhh,” Puffy began slowly, smiling at him, “You’re gonna be okay, Tommy-”

*“I’m not!”* He shrieked, pulling at his hair, *“Don’t you get it!? Nothing is okay because I’m- I’m the same!”*

The people around the room blinked in confusion, looking at each other. Even Phil seemed to be awakened from his trance, awoken by the cries of his youngest.

Tubbo was in a panic, staring at his friend with wide and terrified eyes. He felt a hand on his shoulder gently pulling him away and realized it was Sam; ushering him to give Tommy space.

He sighed, complying and retreating backward.

“What are you talking about?” Ranboo asked, clearly very confused.

Tommy sobbed again, hiccuping and wiping at his eyes hurriedly.

“I- It’s what Puffy said!” He cried, “I saw that I was becoming someone I hated and I stopped in the moment! But I- It’s been *months* and I *still* hate the person I am!”

Ranboo’s heart stopped in his chest, and he felt as if all the air had been sucked from his lungs.

“Tommy,” he began, tears welling in his own eyes, “Tommy I-” he raised his arms, to move and hug the boy before realizing that it was *Tommy* and he couldn’t touch him and-

Before he could even lower his arms, Tommy had surged forwards, burying his face in Ranboo’s chest and wrapping his arms around him tightly.

Puffy and Tubbo alike made shocked noises, and for just a moment Ranboo was frozen, but he quickly moved to hug the boy back. He curled his arms around the tiny teen, resting his chin on top of Tommy’s head.



Tommy could barely focus on anything but the touch. It *burned* but he needed it *so bad*. Even if it'd been excruciating he would have held on for dear life. He *needed* this. He couldn't let go, in fear of never being hugged again.

"I've got you Tommy," Ranboo assured him gently, sobbing quietly, "I promise."

*"I just can't do it anymore."* Tommy admitted, holding on even tighter as he said the words.

The enderman had to use every bit of self-control he had not to go completely rigid.

"What can't you do anymore?" He asked quietly, looking up at Puffy with a pained expression.

*"Any of this."* He whispered. "I just can't."

Jack shared a look with Niki.

"I'm sure if you wanted to leave Drista would let y-"

"No," Tommy shook his head, whining quietly, "I can't keep *living*, Ranboo."

No amount of self-control could save the enderman there. He instantly froze, eyes widening.

The others around the room looked just as disturbed.

"What?" He demanded, holding Tommy tighter with shaky hands.

“I already told you,” The blond cried into his chest, “I mean I- I said *months* ago that I hated who I was and it wasn’t enough! I’m still the same person I- I’m still just as bad!”

“Tommy,” Karl butted in, barely containing his sobs, “Tommy you are *not* bad.” He shook his head, and it was the angriest any of them had ever heard him.

“You don’t understand!” Tommy shook his head, “I- I *miss him!*”

Puffy stilled at that, as did many others. She leaned in slightly closer, frowning through her tears.

“Who?” She asked him quietly.

*“Dream!”*

The temperature dropped in the room instantly, and Sapnap dissolved into sobs.

Tommy cried, his whole body trembling as Ranboo held onto him for dear life, “I know how disgusting he is and I still *miss him!*” He yelled out loudly, “I miss him so much that it feels like- like I’m gonna *die!*”

Ranboo let out a strangled sob, holding onto him even tighter.

Tubbo felt bile rise in his throat, and the only thing grounding him was Sam’s hand on his shoulder.

Tommy *wailed*, gripping onto the front of Ranboo’s shirt like his life depended on it. The touch fucking burned, it felt like he was being assaulted from all sides but he *needed* it. He never wanted Ranboo to let go because the hybrid was being so soft and gentle with him and it’d been so long since he’d last felt a loving touch. It didn’t matter if he wanted to writhe around, to flinch back, because even more than that he wanted to cling on even tighter.

“I’ve got you Tommy,” Ranboo murmured, “I’ve got you it’s okay.”

Eventually, the sobs subsided, and Puffy looked over to see Tommy leaning on Ranboo in less of a hug but more of a support, the hybrid’s clawed hand in his as he settled down, eyes drooping.

His head dipped, lolling listlessly as he tried to stay awake, and Ranboo’s heart twisted.

“You can sleep, Toms.” Quackity said, leaning over, face perfectly expressing what Ranboo felt. Tommy shook his head, trying to blink himself into awareness.

“No...” He mumbled, “Can’t...” but his head dipped again all the same.

“Why not?” Ranboo asked, shifting slightly so that Tommy could better lean on him.

“Every time I close my eyes i-it’s like I’m back there. In the void... W-What if I get trapped there again? I c-can’t I can’t go back.” He whispered quietly.

“Tommy I promise you,” Quackity began, “We won’t let a single thing happen to you while you sleep, Okay? You won’t go back there, promise.” Ranboo looked over and noticed how the duck hybrid’s hands were shaking, and when he looked back up there were tears rolling down Quackity’s face as he smiled softly at the server’s youngest member.

Tommy looked as if he wanted to argue, but the pull of sleep was too strong, and within minutes his head was resting on Ranboo’s arm, breathing evened out. Both the Enderman and his husband knew Tommy had gotten close to no sleep since his revival.

For a moment everyone was quiet, just listening to the silence,

and then Tubbo broke down into sobs.

Puffy surged forward to hold him, and he cried into her arms.

Ranboo wasn't sure what was going to happen next, but he definitely hadn't been expecting the screen to start up once more.

Apparently, Drista was on a tight schedule.

Tubbo sniffled, leaning back and smiling sadly at Puffy.

"It's okay," She told him, smiling back with unshed tears in her eyes, "We're gonna make it okay."

# desolate

## Chapter Summary

doomsday!!

tw for blood and gore-ish and general tteatb graphic stuff !

Ranboo stared down at where Tommy was slumped on his side, breathing evened out and hair falling forward; obscuring part of his face. The blond had been asleep for a few minutes, and the room had been waiting nervously with baited breath, terrified of waking him.

Quackity had fallen back in his seat moments after coaxing him to sleep, exasperated and holding back tears.

Puffy knelt before Tubbo, hand on his knee as she gathered her bearings.

But the screen started up all the same, for this time there was no gap to ponder, no space to cry. Drista seemed to have no sympathy for them, nothing holding her back.

Things were nearing their end.

**Smoke flooded the air, pouring out in all directions as it encompassed the world around it. The smog was thick and dark, almost black, and as it filled the lungs of the people around them, there was one boy amidst the crowds who seemed to be accustomed to the soot.**

**Alone on a ledge carved from tragedy, a platform built from death and destruction, stood Tommy. He'd crawled his way up, scraping his arms and knees as he desperately grasped at jagged rock, and there he was finally; a witness to the carnage.**

Ranboo's tail curled gently around Tommy's leg, and he leaned over in the smallest amount so that he was hunched ever so slightly over the boy.

The room was quiet, save for the sound of small snuffles and coughs. Phil, who had perked up ever so slightly at the sound of his son's cries, had gone back to a blank slate, staring blankly ahead of him.

**Above him, a man with long braided hair and a large cape stood upon an obsidian grid. His white button up was squashed beneath layers of netherite, barely visible. A grin marred his face, smug and villainous as he stared down at the smouldering remains of what used to be so loved with nothing but contempt.**

**Around them, the world moved even faster. Large snarling creatures with a stench that felt all too familiar to that of death were spanned across the skies. They spat globs of cancerous sludge, incinerating whatever it touched as it dripped down their chins.**

**The scene felt all too familiar, and Tommy bit back a snarl.**

*His ears were ringing.*

*Explosions went off in the back, making the ground he stood on shake. People dressed head to toe in netherite were running in all directions, brandishing their weapons and waving them around wildly. They all blended together by that point, there was only one actual enemy. The sides had blurred together in a desperate attempt to salvage what little they had. Screams echoed throughout the country and vaguely he could hear laughter as well.*

*His ears were ringing.*

Tommy's cheeks were rosy in the dim lighting, tear tracks still visible on his pale skin. His hands were cold and clammy, and he shivered even in his sleep. His face was sunken in and ghostly, as though he was sick.

A pang went through Ranboo's chest, and he bit back tears, revelling in the fact that Tommy was *there* and he was safe and he was pressed up against him.

*I'll do better this time*, he thought to himself, *I'll keep you safe*.

Tommy shifted in his sleep, nestling in closer to Ranboo. He exhaled softly, burying his face in the fabric of the taller's suit, and Ranboo bit his tongue, holding back a pained whine.

The sight of Tommy *hurt* him. It felt so silly but the truth was that looking at the blond had him wrestling with a tightness in his chest, a feeling so raw and real that it *hurt*. Every ounce of his body was screaming at him to latch onto the small boy and never let go, to never let any harm befall him again.

Near the back, however, Technoblade was completely quiet, looking uncomfortable but almost... *bored* in the same sense. He didn't seem to be very upset by recent happenings. His hands were folded gently in his lap, and he seemed to be more or less unfazed. The only things that had truly got a reaction from him had been moments about himself.

***"Look at this!" Tommy shrieked, gesturing outwards at the land devastated by a fool, "How is this what you wanted!?" He demanded, tears pricking at his eyes.***

**People screamed at their feet, barely dodging explosions as they tried desperately to find cover. It was desolate and cold, a barren wasteland with the bodies of beloved pets and friends littering the ground. Blood was splattered across the stone, dripping down slowly.**

It was gruesome. *Beyond* gruesome. For some reason *Doomsday* had made it seem like so much more of a battle, a moment where the most powerful people went toe to toe, but that wasn't it.

Doomsday had been the most powerful people teaming together to take what people loved for selfish reasons. Doomsday had been two men with the world in the palms of their hands laughing as they watched the rest scramble and cling desperately to whatever they had left.

The sight had George and Karl alike feeling sick. *They hadn't been there.*

**“The end justifies the means, Tommy!” Technoblade cried back, shield held up closely to his chest and axe gripped tightly in hand.**

“You’re a fucking dick, dude.” Quackity whispered, eyes still red rimmed. There was no real bite to his tone, no real fire left, “Like... Seriously.”

**Tommy narrowed his eyes, taking a shaky step forward, but when he moved to speak, he found himself at a loss for words. “Techno...” He began, looking pained, “I- you-”**

**“This is what has to be done, Tommy!” The older one shouted, shoulders hiked up high, “There was no other way!”**

“It didn’t.” Tubbo muttered quietly. “It didn’t have to be done.”

Technoblade raised a brow, leaning forward slightly. “Go on.”

The former president narrowed his eyes, turning around in his seat, “If you actually cared about power corrupting and hoarding of power then you would have gone against *Dream*.” He hissed, “You would have helped us.”

“Dream’s not a government-”

*“Who gives a fuck about government, Technoblade!?”* Tubbo cried, flinging his arms in the air. Tommy shifted slightly in his sleep, and the older boy quickly quieted down. He glared at the piglin hybrid.



“L’Manberg was a free country, okay? We were *happy*.” His voice broke slightly in desperation, “You- you walked in with some sort of saviour complex, some idea that the citizens needed to be saved but they *didn’t*! And *you* were the one that hurt them the most.”

“Alright,” Techno snorted, shaking his head, “clearly you don’t understand that anarchism is the disregard for government, for the *absence* of government.” He rolled his eyes.

“And clearly *you* don’t understand that sometimes *real people* are worth more than that, Technoblade.” Puffy narrowed her eyes.

“At least I stick to the same principles,” The piglin scoffed, “I’d rather go searching for a needle in a haystack than seek out consistency in this server.” He smirked.

“Right,” Sam hummed, “because siding with the ultimate authority is definitely peak anti-authoritarianism.”

Technoblade was very quiet for a moment, a scrutinizing gaze fixed on the warden.

“Let’s just move on,” He relented, “you guys just wouldn’t get it.” He chuckled.

**Just feet away, Fundy skidded to a halt, narrowly dodging a wither’s shot. He panted heavily, teeth grit. There was something in his eye, something greying. A sort of loss of colour Tommy had only ever seen in Wilbur’s eyes.**

**He turned away before he could see the manic grin spreading across the fox’s face.**

Fundy shifted uncomfortably, a restlessness in his bones.

**“Power corrupts!” Technoblade claimed loudly, “Don’t you see?”**

The fox perked up at that, however, eager to talk his way out of the disgusting feeling simmering inside of him.

“Don’t *you* have the most power?” He implored, quirking a brow. And, sure, there was a bit of smugness there, perhaps a bit more than necessary, but he felt entitled to it as he watched Doomsday play out once more on the big screen.

“That’s different.” Technoblade quipped back, unimpressed.

**And Tommy looked out into the expanse, out into the crater that had once been something he loved so dearly, and he tried so desperately to see. For his own brother’s sake he tried with all his might to see, but he couldn’t.**

**L’Manberg was his home. L’Manberg was the home of so many. He’d lost two of his lives, given up his discs, and watched his brother fall apart at the seams, all for nothing.**

**All he’d ever wanted was a home and a family that wouldn’t leave him.**

**“You were-” Tommy began, choking back a harrowed laugh, “you were my *friend!*” And it was so much more than a brother. Technoblade had been someone he’d considered an ally, someone not bound by familial ties.**

Phil didn’t so much as blink.

**He’d thought that they’d been linked by blood of the covenant and not just some silly obligation.**

**“And yet you went back to Tubbo!” Technoblade hissed angrily, “The guy that exiled you!”**

**The ground shook beneath their feet, and the two had to fight to retain their balance.**

***“You’re selfish!”*** Tommy screamed, ***“All along I thought it was me that was, but you know what? It’s you!”*** He shook his head, ***“You’re destroying the things people love for your own selfish reasons! People are above the government, Techno!”***

Ranboo looked down once more at the sleeping boy, heart twisting.

Tubbo was quiet, fists clenched at his side.

***“And what about me!?”*** The piglin roared, a hand on his chest, ***“I’m a person!”***

***“You are!”*** Tommy cried back, blinking back tears, ***“and so are we!”*** An explosion rattled at the ground just feet away from him and he grit his teeth, steadying himself.

***“Oh Tommy…”*** Puffy whispered quietly, eyes glossing over.

***“What about when I stood alone!?”*** Technoblade demanded, ***“when I stood against everyone and you and Wilbur watched from the sidelines? Did you help me? Did you offer me anything? No!”*** His voice cracked, if only just barely, ***“But you know what I did yesterday, Tommy? I was willing to fight them all for you! I would have fought by your side!”***

***“Techno…”*** Niki began, frowning and tilting her head. She leaned forward, as if she wanted to reach out towards him. He let out a low huff, shrugging her off.

Tubbo watched the fray from just a step below the two, mouth pressed into a thin line. His suit was tattered and torn, and his hair disheveled.

Above them all, Tommy heard a light chuckle, a sort of laugh that didn’t belong among the desecration below. His heart stopped still in his chest, and he slowly, so very carefully, looked up.

**Phil stood upon the obsidian grid, a lopsided grin painting his face from cheek to cheek. His robes billowed in the wind, one hand holding his hat firmly in place and the other with a bow in hand. Arrows were slung across his waist, hanging lowly at his hip. His wings flared out proudly, one of them preened and gorgeous, an omen of what was to come, and the other frayed and damaged beyond repair, the other with a promise on its tongue of what had already come.**

### ***Death.***

Technoblade looked over to see his father looking deathly pale, a sort of sickly complexion he'd never seen before.

Phil was silent, knuckles white as he grasped at his robes. He didn't dare breathe, as if something was caught in his throat.

Fundy looked over wearily, expecting his grandfather to react; perhaps to dissolve into sobs or stand in a panic.

But Phil didn't move. He merely sat with his hands clasped in his lap, breathing steadily and staring ahead, a dead look in his eyes.

**Distantly, Tommy heard the screams. He heard the cries of innocent people, the sound of animals shrieking, pinned under debris. He could smell the blood, could smell the death, but his eyes were trained on the man above him.**

**"...Phil?" He whispered quietly, so quietly that it was almost inaudible. His father stood before him, and suddenly Tommy couldn't breathe.**

**They locked eyes for just a moment, a split second, before the ground beneath them shook so heavily it sent Tommy falling to his knees, and he just barely caught himself. The palms of his hands scraped against jagged rock, and when he looked back up Phil had already turned away, walking off into the smog.**

**The screen went dark.**

The room was dead silent for just a moment, the people not sure what to say. Doomsday had felt so much more... energetic in the moment. With adrenaline pumping through their bloodstreams and nothing but ringing in their ears, it had seemed so much more *alive*.

In reality, it was flat. Doomsday had been a joke.

“It feels like...” Ranboo paused, unsure if he should continue, but many eyes were glued to him, “it feels like the control room all over again.”

Tubbo and Fundy alike sucked in a sharp breath, and for just a moment Ranboo worried if he’d overstepped.

“That’s exactly what it was,” Tubbo murmured, looking at the ground, “a bloodbath.”

“We never stood a fucking chance.” Fundy laughed bitterly.

The screen started back up once more.

**Tommy’s shoes crunched against the broken and crumbling asphalt as he walked, echoing throughout the crater that used to be a home. The hand-me-down boots he had been wearing were long forgotten, tucked away in one of his chests and replaced with a pair of worn-down sneakers.**

For some reason, the sight left Techno feeling angry.

**He held his bandana over his mouth and nose, squinting in the thick grey smoke. Tubbo was at his side, armour discarded at some point. His hair had been messily shoved**

**back.**

**The two slowly made their way toward the stairway that led to the obsidian grid, sidestepping piles of flesh and glass. They tried to ignore the smell of the rot already sinking in.**

**They ascended in silence, sticking close to one another as they did. Explosions still went off haphazardly, spewing debris across the land.**

Jack winced at the sight of it all. He'd been trying so desperately to pretend that day had never happened, specifically the aftermath.

**Dream was sitting quietly upon the grid, dressed in netherite head to toe. His legs were hanging over the edge, swinging back and forth carelessly as he stared down at the wreckage.**

Almost all of them tensed at the sight of the man, growing weary.

Ranboo looked down at Tommy, watching the sleeping boy carefully.

**Tommy hesitated for just a moment, breath catching in his throat, but Tubbo was quick to grab his hand, squeezing it once.**

Tubbo felt bile rising in his throat.

**“Look,” Dream began softly, as if he'd sensed them approaching from behind, “in all destruction,” he paused, “there's a new beginning.” He nodded towards the ground, looking down at the carnage.**

Sam glared.

**Tommy shook his head, tears building in his eyes. “You did this,” he muttered, “to everyone,” he laughed, “not just to me but to all of us.”**

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Sapnap tilted his head.

**The masked man looked back down, eyes scanning over the ground.**

**“Beautiful.” He smiled. “It’s the- the uh- unfinished symphony, right?”**

Niki glared, biting her tongue.

**Tommy went rigid, and beside him Tubbo was silent. He looked over the edge, staring down at what used to be something so loved and something so cherished. The bodies of the hound army littered the area, and blood coated the ground in thick red globs.**

**“Why?” He whispered, “*Why Dream?*” He paused, blinking back tears, “Couldn’t you have just... *couldn’t you have just burnt the discs?*” He looked over at Tubbo, and then to the smoldering remains of L’Manberg, “Couldn’t you have just done it to me?”**

And oh.

*Oh.*

Many heads turned to the present version of the blond, as if surprised. Tommy was still, breathing gently against Ranboo’s side, and for whatever reason the enderman felt a need to shield the boy from prying eyes.

“He would have rather lost the discs over L’Manberg.” Fundy said plainly, face unreadable.

“He never acted like it.” Niki scoffed, crossing her arms.

Tubbo narrowed his eyes at that, turning around to stare at her. “Were you not paying attention when he gave up both discs for our independence?” He cocked a brow, “or minutes ago when he gave Dream both the discs again?”

Niki flushed almost instantly, eyes widening. “That’s not what I meant!” She hissed, “Of course he gave them up sometimes, but he always gave them up knowing he could steal them back!” She gave the former president a knowing look, “did you really think he’d ever really be willing to *burn* them?”

Tubbo was quiet for a moment, looking down. He cocked his head to the side to get a glimpse of where Tommy was slumped over, shivering still.

“For me, he would have.” He muttered quietly.

Without another word he turned back around, looking up at the screen, and Niki didn’t bother with a reply.

**The three were quiet for a moment, and Tommy clenched his fists at his side, pushing back his tears as hard as he could.**

**“...Well this is much more fun.” Dream said finally, as though he were amused.**

Quackity grit his teeth, seething at the screen. Beside him, Sapnap looked just as furious, and for the first time, he realized, *truly* realized, that Sapnap had chosen to fight against Dream on Doomsday.

Sapnap had denounced Dream before the vault.



*For Tommy.*

A chill went up Tommy's spine as his eyes glazed over and he looked the man up and down. *Dream* who had starved him, who had beat him, who had *loved* him, all for some sick satisfaction; some desperate plea to not be overshadowed.

"You're a monster." He spat, using as much malice as he could possibly muster.

Puffy nodded quietly to herself, tearing up.

"Okay!" *Dream* chirped, and Tommy could *hear* the smile in his voice.

It was as if Tommy viewing him as subhuman, as something more, was somehow what *Dream wanted*.

It left a bad taste on his tongue.

"I'm going to uh... to get away from here." The masked man began, standing and dusting himself off, "For a little bit."

"And never come back?" Karl offered, earning a snicker from George and an amused huff from Tubbo.

"If only." Fundy muttered, "fucking freak."

"This is too far," Tommy shook his head, taking a step closer despite everything inside of him telling him to step *away*, "you've gone too far this time. You- you *know* you're a monster, don't you?"

**He looked back down at everything that Dream and Techno had done together and felt bile rise in his throat. Buildings reduced to rubble were still smoldering. Something that had been built upon its ashes was doomed to repeat the same fate.**

Puffy stared with a frown on her face. “In his head, he’s right, y’know?” She murmured, and many people turned to look at her. “We’ve seen him do it before... Twist his words, make people think he’s a good guy... he makes himself believe it too.”

“I refuse to believe anyone who hurts a kid like that *actually* thinks they’re the good guy.” Sapnap commented bitterly. *And not just any kid*, he thought quietly to himself, *but Tommy*.

Tommy, who was loud and annoying, who stole and destroyed without ever saying sorry, who talked over people and was so terribly self-centered.

Tommy who was the only one to take Sapnap’s side during the burning of the lemon tree, who spoke to the bugs and slept in the grass, who was so *happy* and full of life.

“He had us fooled, didn’t he?” Puffy smiled sadly.

Sapnap felt too sick to reply.

**“Tommy,” Dream interjected, nearing the boy, “I’m not done with you, okay? Our story isn’t over.” He tilted his head downwards, “L’manberg’s story is over... but...”**

**The blond didn’t speak, glaring and casting his gaze across the horizon. He nearly choked, however, when he saw Ghostbur standing on the edge of the crater, looking down. He felt shaky in the knees and let out a low whine.**

**“Our story’s not over.”**

“Jesus fucking Christ can’t he just- can he leave Tommy *alone!*?” Quackity cried, throwing his hands in the air. He looked as if he was in physical pain, eyes creased and lips pulled into a tight frown.

**Tommy took a deep breath, steeling himself over. He whirled around in a silent fury, eyes narrowed as he stared at the older man.**

**“Now you listen to me,” he began lowly, “our story’s not over, *but it will be.*”**

*Tell him!* Tubbo cheered quietly, *Tell him off!*

**Dream was very quiet for a moment, and slowly he tilted his head to the side, like he was sympathetic or perhaps pitying. “I don’t think our story will ever be over, Tommy,” He murmured, “you’re just... *too fun.*”**

A collective shiver ran through the room, and many of them physically recoiled.

“Oh god...” Karl muttered, bringing a hand to his mouth.

“Fun.” George repeated, “He actually called it *fun.*”

**Another delayed explosion shook the ground, but the grid remained untouched.**

**Tommy felt as if he’d been thrown right back into the icy waters of exile, shivering. He looked up at the man defiantly, ready to retaliate, but found himself at a loss for words.**

**Tubbo was completely silent off to the side, staring off the edge at the crater.**

**“Well!” Dream clapped his hands together, startling the other two, “I guess I’ll be off then! I’ll see the both of you later, okay?”**

**Neither of them replied, merely watching as he stalked off.**

**The screen faded to black.**

A long silence stretched between the group as they sat quietly, unsure of what to say.

“Is he doing okay, Ranboo?” Puffy asked gently, craning her neck to get a look at the sleeping blond.

“He’s fine,” Ranboo assured, nodding, “he *definitely* needed this. I don’t think he’s actually gotten a night’s rest since his r-” he paused, paling slightly, “Since he uh- since he came back...”

The older woman smiled sympathetically, giving him a tiny thumbs up.

He curled his tail slightly tighter around Tommy’s leg.

*I’ll do better this time*, he thought once more, repeating it continuously, *I’ll keep you safe*.

# and the player was love

## Chapter Summary

The final disc war ^ \_ ^

Trigger Warnings: References to abuse, blood, character death

Quackity hadn't been able to fully concentrate since Tommy had fallen asleep. What felt like every other minute he found himself staring at the teen, watching the steady rise and fall of his chest wearily.

It felt... wrong.

Tommy had finally snapped, and it'd left a rotten taste in Quackity's mouth. The sight of Tommy sobbing, of him holding onto Ranboo for dear life wouldn't leave his mind, and all he could do was think back to it and *ache*.

He'd wanted it at first, to see Tommy finally *react*, but after it'd happened, he just didn't feel right. There was a constant nagging in the back of his mind, a little voice chirping nonstop, telling him over and over again that *Tommy needs help* or *Tommy's in danger*.

And, of course, every time he looked over, nothing had changed. Tommy would still be sleeping, head resting on Ranboo's shoulder, breathing softly.

Still, Quackity was uneasy, and felt as though he needed to *do* something. He needed to *help* Tommy, but there wasn't actually anything he could do.

Seeing Tommy like that had broken a part of him; a part of him he hadn't even known was there.

From the very beginning it had been Tommy at his side. It had been Tommy who welcomed him to the server with open arms and a loud laugh. It had been Tommy who wished him good luck during the elections despite running an opposite party.

Quackity had only ever wanted good things for Tommy, and there wasn't anyone else on the server that he cared about in the same way he did for Tommy.

Of course he had Karl and Sapnap, of course he had Sam, of course he had Fundy, but those people were different. Tommy was a *kid*. Tommy was kind and loud and annoying and everything good and bad mixed into one. Quackity couldn't think of another person who he'd fight for like he'd fight for Tommy, because Tommy *needed* someone to fight for him; and Quackity was more than willing.

He looked over at the blond, heart twisting in his chest at the mere sight of the boy.

Beside him, Karl gripped his hand, smiling at him softly when he realized what he was looking at. The time-traveller rested his head on Quackity's shoulder, and the latter smiled to himself.

Moments later, the screen flickered to life.

**Tubbo and Tommy walked quietly, single file a small forest, striding through the trees. The leaves and grass had been packed down time and time again, and a small path had been formed. It was dark, the moonlight barely seeping through the treetops.**

Tubbo's eyes flashed with recognition, and he realized with a pit in his stomach what they were about to see.

**The two approached the end of the trail, poking their heads out and staring at a desolate beach. Both boys were dressed in netherite head to toe, shoulders tense.**

**Neither of them spoke as Tubbo swiftly moved to a bushed area, revealing a hidden boat. The waves lapped silently at the shore as their heavy boots sunk in the sand.**

**They dragged the boat towards the water, pushing with all their might to get it afloat. The cold sea nipped at their ankles, and there was nothing but the sound of their feet splashing in the water and the gentle tide.**

**“What is this?” Puffy questioned, tilting her head.**

**“Right before the vault.” Tubbo told her quietly, “Right after we said our goodbyes to all of you on the path.”**

**Tommy paused, staring out into the horizon. Clutched tightly in his hand was the compass Dream had left for him, the one that led to the discs, pointing in that same direction.**

**“Ready?” Tubbo questioned, smiling softly. His hair was smushed awkwardly beneath the helmet, sticking out at odd angles.**

**The blond let out a small huff, smiling back and nodding determinedly. “Yeah,” He affirmed, “let’s do this.”**

**Tubbo looked over sadly at the sleeping boy to his left.**

**The two climbed into the boat, shaking off their feet and seating themselves in the rickety wooden craft. It swayed unevenly for a moment before righting itself, bobbing in the water.**

**Without another word, they began to row.**

**They took turns, letting the other rest their arms as they went along. The trip seemed to prove further and further by each second, and they sat in a tense silence. The only time they'd speak was when Tommy would tell Tubbo which way to turn.**

**Tommy pursed his lips, looking down at the water. His reflection stared back at him and he frowned. Ever so gently, he dipped his fingers into the ocean, letting them drag along as the small boat continued on its way.**

**"I have an idea!" Tubbo chirped all at once, grinning wide and breaking the silence.**

**Tommy *screamed*, jumping up in his seat and turning back to the other with wide eyes. He put a hand to his chest, panting heavily.**

**Many of them laughed at that, the atmosphere lightening slightly.**

**Almost instantly, Tubbo dissolved into hysterics, pausing in his rowing to clutch at his stomach as he gasped for air.**

**"It's not fucking funny!" Tommy cried, cheeks growing red as his friend continued to laugh, "It's not!"**

**Sam smiled softly, watching the blond's antics.**

**He glared as Tubbo continued, waiting for the boy to simmer down, and for a moment they sat completely still in the silence.**

**"So what was your idea, Tubbs?" Tommy hummed, looking over with a raised brow.**

**"Oh," Tubbo beamed, perking up again, "I was thinking we could play I-Spy to pass the time!"**



**“I-Spy?” Ranboo repeated, slightly quizzical.**

**“It’s my favourite game,” Tubbo scoffed, rolling his eyes half-heartedly, “why do you think me and Michael play it so much?”**

**The blond gave the older teen an amused glance before rolling his eyes.**

**“Fine,” He sighed, “you go first.”**

**And so they continued on their way, but in the place of silence was a silly game they’d used to play as kids. The compass weighed heavy in Tommy’s hands.**

**Minutes went by in what felt like seconds, the two laughing together and rocking the boat with their antics. For a moment, they forgot what they were even doing.**

**For a moment they weren’t Tommy and Tubbo on some final quest to beat Dream, but just two teens in a boat in the middle of the sea; Two children laughing to themselves in the early morning hours.**

Many people in the room didn’t know how to react to the scene. As they watched the two approach their untimely demise, all they could think was that these were *kids*.

The games and childish antics made it all the more real, and that meant all the more uncomfortable.

**“Hmmm,” Tommy pondered, leaning on the side of the boat. There was no paint beneath his nails, no paint being picked from the wood, “I spy with my little eye...” He paused, looking around.**

**There wasn't too much to see in the vast expanse of the ocean. The water was almost completely black beneath them, deeper than any man had ever ventured, and it surrounded them for miles.**

**"I..." His eyes widened, a pit forming in his stomach, " *Oh...*" He muttered, staring ahead, "*Oh my god.*"**

**Before them was an island. A massive mountain carved from rock that went into the clouds was tall and slim. It loomed over the two with an incriminating aura; dark even as the sun began to rise, and looked to be almost... unnatural.**

Having both entered and left through the portal in the vault, many of them were shocked at the sheer size of the island, staring with wide eyes.

"Holy shit." Fundy muttered

**"I spy it too..." Tubbo laughed nervously.**

**Wordlessly, the ram turned the boat, maneuvering around the jagged rocks that jutted out of the water. They pulled up on the side of a cliff with nowhere else to dock, and Tommy hastily began to climb, pickaxe in his shaking hand.**

**"Do you think we're ready?" He asked his friend as they scaled the mountain. Beneath him the groove he'd placed one of his feet on crumbled to dust and he grit his teeth as he held onto his pick that was rammed into the rock.**

**It took Tubbo a few moments to reply, concentrating hard on not losing his footing. He took a deep breath, wiping away the sweat from his brow and staring down at the blond.**

**"Not at all." He said simply. He continued climbing without another word.**

“And I was right.” He chirped.

The others didn’t seem as amused as him.

**Eventually, they reached the top; and when they did it was with a pit forming in Tommy’s stomach.**

**He was scared.**

**With a fleeting glance towards his friend, a sort of reassurance that Tubbo was *there* and that he wouldn’t be facing Dream alone, they moved to round the corner before them.**

**They were met with a small valley nestled in the crook of one of the mountain’s ledges. Patchy and yellowing grass decorated the earth, a single tree standing amidst the emptiness of it all.**

**And in the middle of everything, there was Dream.**

Quackity seized at the sight of the man, as did many others. If his presence before the room hadn’t been jarring, it was undeniably so now.

**Dressed head to toe in netherite, shoulders squared and back ramrod straight, he stood beside an enderchest.**

**For just a second, Tommy was paralyzed with fear. For just a moment he was back in exile, small and defenseless.**

**“I’m here.” Tubbo whispered quietly, brushing against his side.**

Puffy's heart twisted at the action, and she looked at the ram hybrid sadly, smiling at him.

**Tommy breathed in shakily, steeling himself over. He gripped his sword tightly, knuckles turning white.**

**Dream was completely silent, staring at them eerily.**

**Tubbo looked to Tommy, and Tommy looked to Tubbo, and together they nodded.**

**Without a word they surged forward, Tommy charging headfirst and Tubbo flanking towards the back; like they always had. Dream backed away, quickly raising his shield and bracing himself.**

“You guys have like,” Karl paused, slightly confused, “twin telepathy.”

Tubbo laughed loudly.

**And Tommy couldn't help the breathless laugh that escaped him as the sun peeked over the horizon. The golden light spilled out into the world, and Tommy laughed again, the frostbitten air turning his breath to small puffs.**

**Dream dodged a swing, lowering himself near the ground and kicking out at Tubbo's legs, but the latter pulled back, concentrated but with a light in his eyes that had been out for much too long.**

**He grinned, ramming into Dream's defense and knocking him back. The older man stepped back with a loud grunt.**

**And Tommy felt *glee*. Despite the fight for their lives, despite the fact that this was *it*, that this was the final battle, he couldn't help but smile.**

Phil stared at his youngest in wonder. He'd never seen Tommy look like that, not even as a kid.

**Because it was Tubbo and him once again. Just as it had been in the beginning he was back at his best friend's, his *brother's* side, and nothing was going to stop them.**

**They existed in complete tandem. Even as Dream towered up high into the sky, they followed along, watching one another's backs with outstretched arms. They would always be there to catch one another.**

Tubbo felt a pang in his chest, and he felt oddly nostalgic, despite all the bad that had come only minutes later.

**Atop the tower, Dream kicked Tommy in the chest, *hard*, and the boy went flying back. He gasped for air back hitting the ground as he screamed in pain.**

***"Tommy!"* Tubbo shrieked from above, eyes wide with horror.**

Sapnap cringed at the action, frowning at the screen.

**But through the pain, Tommy grinned, groaning and turning onto his stomach as he pushed himself up. His arm was tucked into his side, and for a moment Tubbo feared the worst, but as Tommy pulled back, there was no wound to be revealed, but a disc.**

**It reflected in the sunlight, momentarily blinding the two upon the tower.**

***"I've got it!"* Tommy cried, eyes alight.**

“You’d think that wouldn’t be that impressive,” Fundy began, “cause it’s a 2v1, but it’s really fucking impressive. That dude doesn’t lose like- ever.”

George huffed, amused.

**Tubbo let out a disbelieving laugh, grinning. “You’ve got it!?”**

**“I’ve got it!” The blond repeated, standing on shaky legs.**

**Dream glared down, narrowing his eyes at the boy. He sheathed his sword, pulling his axe from where it was strapped to his back as Tommy ran for the hills.**

**Tubbo didn’t even have a chance to blink before he was raising his shield, just barely in time to block the blow. He let out a startled cry, stumbling back before jumping down to the ground and landing with a roll.**

“Oh fuck.”

**The masked man followed immediately after him, just inches away, and Tubbo blanched.**

**“Tommy,” He began in a panic, backing away with his shield held firmly to his chest, “Tommy he’s killing me.”**

**There was a silence, and then a delayed *What?* From the hills, but still no sign of the blond.**

**Tubbo jumped back, crying out in alarm.**

***“Tommy, he's killing me!”***

Ranboo cringed, looking away from the screen. He couldn't bare the sight, despite knowing his husband was right there.

***“What do you mean he's killing you!?”*** Tommy's head poked out from around the corner, and it would have been comical in other circumstances. He paled instantly at the sight of Dream looming over Tubbo, and he scrambled to put himself in the fray.

**“Stop!”** He cried, desperately panting, **“Stop right fucking there!”**

“No self-preservation...” Techno muttered.

The older man paused, turning to look at him and tilting his head. A low laugh came from behind his mask.

**“Don't you see?”** Dream grinned, **“I can kill both of you whenever I want!”** He raised his arms, **“You're going to die, Tommy. You're going to *lose*.”**

“Prick.” Jack whispered lowly, a tired look in his eyes.

Tommy was silent, staring at Tubbo with his brows furrowed together. The older teen looked *scared*.

**“Look,”** Dream sighed, **“Just- Just choose between your disc or Tubbo, okay? You either give it to me, or Tubbo dies.”**

“Well, that should be an easy decision.” Niki snorted, rolling her eyes.

**Tommy refused to speak, voice caught at the back of his throat.**

**“Dream...” He began quietly.**

**The man in question took a step towards the teen, scaring him back slightly. “And you know I’m not going to kill *you*...” He murmured, a smile in his tone, “but Tubbo...”**

**The older teen took that as his chance to sneak away, shoulders tense as he ran and hid behind Tommy. The blond looked back at his friend, frowning deeply.**

**“But-”**

**“*Tommy*,” Dream began, exasperated, “I haven’t even tried yet, okay? I have speed pots, I have pearls, I have my trident.” He paused, looking at the two, “You can’t defend him Tommy. Just give me the disc.”**

**“He’s sort of just...” Technoblade paused, “a bully.”**

**“I think he’s a bit more than that, dude.” Fundy laughed incredulously.**

**“No no,” The piglin shook his head, “I mean the fact that he’s a grown man playing all these games with kids, y’know? It’s like the older kids making the kid they’re picking on be the monkey in the middle. It’s just sad to watch that kid, the loser kid, try.”**

**“Thanks.” Tubbo bit out sarcastically.**

**And there was silence. A moment of pure agony from Tommy. The discs were in his grip, he could *win*. After what felt like *decades* of being beaten down and bloody by Dream he could finally be the one to win.**



**Dream began to count down from ten, seemingly growing annoyed. The axe in his hand was glowing in the low light.**

**Tubbo grabbed Tommy's hand, forcing the latter to look back at him. There was a serious look in his eyes, lips pulled into a tight frown.**

**“Keep the discs.” He said, squeezing the blond's hand. “Keep them.”**

“*Tubbo!*” Ranboo cried, affronted. Despite the fact that he was caring for the sleeping teen on his shoulder, he seemed to do an excellent job both keeping Tommy asleep and chewing Tubbo out simultaneously.

The ram cringed, shrinking in on himself slightly.

“It's not what it looks like-” He began.

“Oh really?” Ranboo cocked his head to the side, “Because it *looks like* you're telling Tommy to let you die.”

Tubbo was quiet for a moment, not making eye contact. He sighed quietly.

“I just wanted to make it up to him.” He admitted, still refusing to meet his husband's eyes.

Ranboo blinked, taken aback. He furrowed his brow, confused.

“What?” He demanded.

Tubbo groaned, rubbing at his face, “I just- I *gave* the discs to Dream and then he destroyed *everything*.” He muttered, “I did that to Tommy for- for nothing.”

“And you thought *dying* was going to make it up to him?” Karl raised a brow.

“I don’t want to die!” Tubbo snapped, hugging himself tightly, “I’m not... like that.” He looked over at Tommy for just a moment, “But I don’t- I want Tommy to be *happy*, okay? And I couldn’t make him give up those discs again I-”

“Tubbo,” Quackity interjected, mouth pulled into a thin line, “if I burned the discs right now, Tommy would kill me.” He stated simply, “But if I killed *you* right now? Tommy would kill *himself*.”

The ram hybrid was very quiet, though he looked affronted.

“You mean more to Tommy than the discs, Tubbo.” Puffy said quietly, “That’s why he told you to give them to Dream in the first place.”

Tubbo didn’t bother answering, staring down at the ground.

**As if ice water had been dumped down Tommy’s back he recoiled, wrenching his hand from Tubbo’s grip.**

**“*Are you insane!?*” He cried angrily, back facing Dream.**

**“I’ve done enough!” Tubbo pleaded, “It’ll be worth it!”**

Ranboo glared at his husband, practically seeing red.

**“Not a fucking word.” Tubbo hissed.**

**The countdown reached two, and Tommy didn’t hesitate to go running. He bolted towards Dream, face pained, and for a moment the man thought he was about to attack.**

**But Tommy stopped just feet away, staring at him with heavy and tired eyes.**

**Wordlessly, he summoned the disc from his inventory and outstretched his arm, offering it to the masked man.**

**“What the hell are you doing!?” Tubbo called, eyes wide.**

**Dream cocked his head to the side, carefully reaching out and grabbing the disc. He stowed it away quietly, not speaking for a moment as Tommy scampered back to his friend, looking the older teen over.**

**“Thanks... I guess...” Dream hummed, looking down at his nails and picking at some of the dirt caught beneath them. “I mean... I didn’t think it would be *that* easy.”**

**Technoblade cocked a brow.**

**“What?” Tubbo demanded, narrowing his eyes.**

**Slowly, he began to laugh. It bubbled up in his throat, quiet and menacing, before evolving into an all-out cackle. The two children stopped, staring back at him hesitantly.**

**“That wasn’t even the disc!” Dream grinned, throwing his arms out wide, “I’m just *playing* with you!”**

The words sent shivers down Sam's back and he glared harshly at the screen.

"They were *fakes*!?" Fundy cried.

**He flung the replica to the ground, not giving either teen a chance to even blink before he'd blown it back. He turned back to them, standing taller than ever.**

**"You both think I'm going to sit here and- and play some build battle with you like I used to but I'm *not*, okay? I'm not stupid!" He laughed loudly, throwing his head back, "I just wanted to show you how powerful I am! How powerless *you* are!"**

"Oh my god..." Puffy began, bringing a hand to her mouth.

**Tommy made a face, curling in on himself. Something sick began to fester inside of him.**

**"I could have let you go or just killed you but I *didn't*." Dream told them excitedly, "I'm toying with you. I'm playing with my food. That's the fun in it."**

"This is fucking *horrible*, man," Quackity shook his head, a pained expression on his face, "What the fuck is wrong with him?"

Sapnap clenched his fists, tears pricking at his eyes.

**Behind him, the sun moved further into the sky, and his shadow was cast over the two teens standing shorter before him.**

**"But now..." His voice became much lower, "now you're going to listen to me. I'm not playing anymore."**

**“Fuck you.” Fundy said simply, as if the man could hear him.**

**Shivers ran up Tommy’s spine, and he looked back at Tubbo with a worried expression. The latter didn’t react.**

**“So here’s what I want you to do,” Dream clapped his hands together, startling the youngest. He grinned behind his mask. “You’re going to drop the Axe of Peace, Tommy.” He instructed.**

**The boy in question raised a brow, noticing the way his enemy had brought his own axe up, and narrowed his eyes.**

**“You’re not gonna kill me.” He spat.**

**Dream was quiet for a moment, as if testing to see if Tommy would comply anyway. After realizing the boy wasn’t going to move, he flung his axe at Tubbo, just narrowly missing him.**

**Tubbo gasped, pulling away with wide eyes.**

**Ranboo wordlessly grasped Tubbo’s hand, breathing heavily.**

**“I’m not dead, Ranboo.” The latter said, point blank, “I’m sitting right here.”**

**The enderman glared at him, wrenching his hand away and muttering something to himself quietly.**

**Instantly, Tommy dropped the axe at Dream’s feet, breathing heavily. The man picked it up wordlessly, stowing it away.**

**He looked back up at the teen, watching him carefully. Ever so slowly, he removed a shovel from his inventory, relishing in the way Tommy paled.**

The temperature in the room dropped, and every single person felt their hearts drop.

“You’re fucking kidding me...” Jack trailed off, swallowing back bile.

**Tubbo stared at his friend as Dream got to work, confused.**

**“Tommy,” The masked man began, trying to hold back a smile, “put your things in the hole.”**

Karl made a pained noise at that, hiding his face in his hands.

**The world stopped in that moment, completely still. Tommy felt the air get sucked from his lungs, and he looked down in complete horror, freezing in his tracks.**

**“No,” he shook his head, voice shaking, “N-No Dream you can’t I-”**

**“Tubbo,” Dream ignored him, looking to the ram hybrid, “put your things in the hole.”**

**Tommy cocked his head to the side, staring with wide eyes as his friend *listened* to the man.**

**Tubbo looked at him as if he was crazy.**

*I’m sorry, Tubbo wanted to say, I didn’t know I’m so sorry.*

He looked over at where Tommy was still completely unconscious, breathing softly.

**“We don’t have any other option.” The older teen told him quietly.**

**Tommy looked down at the hole, feeling bile rise in his throat. Ghosts of explosions rang in his head, and his arms burned with phantom pains. He swallowed thickly.**

**“Put your things in the hole or I am going to kill Tubbo, Tommy.” Dream threatened, growing more impatient by the second.**

**Tubbo was completely still, watching them quietly. His armour and weapons had already been thrown away, and all that was left was his green button-up and blue slacks. Not his suit, but the outfit he used to wear when everything was simpler, when things were *happier*.**

**Tommy bit back tears, taking a shaky breath.**

A pang went through Puffy’s chest. She sniffled quietly.

**Wordlessly, he emptied his inventory. The motions came flooding back instantly, and it felt like routine, like things were back how they were supposed to be. He removed his armour, staring down.**

**He didn’t dare to look as the explosion went off, stifling a whine and turning away, though he heard Tubbo’s shocked cries.**

**When he looked back there was nothing but rubble. All of their armour and potions and supplies had been reduced to ash.**

**“No...” Tubbo whispered, horrified.**

**“That-” Tommy choked on his words, “That took us so long to get! I- I didn’t sleep for *days!*”**

“I saw him grinding for some of that stuff,” Sapnap commented, “he looked fucking crazy. He was going all out. I don’t think I’ve ever seen him working so hard.”

Sam frowned.

**Dream didn’t bother replying, toeing the remains with his boot quietly. They watched as he stared down, nervously inching towards each other.**

**“Follow me.” He stated, looking up at the two. Tommy made a face, opening his mouth to reply, “Or I kill Tubbo.”**

**The blond looked back at his completely defenseless friend, and then down at himself. They had no choice but to oblige.**

**Without so much as even looking back to see if they were following, Dream departed, traversing down the winding stairs he’d carved into the mountain for himself. The two teens in tow looked at one another, frowning, but continuing on in silence.**

“He sure spent a lot of time working on his evil villain base.” Fundy hummed.

“And yet the stairs are still fucking ugly.” Quackity commented.

Tubbo laughed.

**“Stay close.” Tommy whispered.**



The wind howled, pushing them back ever so slightly. They'd been hidden from it tucked within the mountain's side, but once they rounded the corner they were nearly blown away by its might.

"Did you really think you could just show up and beat me?" Dream asked, breaking the silence. "That I wouldn't have a plan? That you could *win*?" He laughed, "I've been one step ahead of the both of you this entire time, you know that... right?"

"*Fuck you.*" Fundy repeated, with more animosity that time.

Neither boy answered, following him down into a cavern that hid them from the sun. Water dripped down the sides of the walls, coating every surface in a slimy layer. Soon enough the only light source was the pools of magma at their feet.

"You're pure evil." Tommy murmured hollowly, hugging himself tightly and shivering in the cold, "How do you sleep at night?"

"Just fine." Dream chirped cheerily, as though he didn't care; as though he didn't feel remorse for *anything* he'd done.

He turned to look at the older teen. "Tubbo thought I was his *friend*." He laughed, looking over at Tommy, "I mean... what an idiot, right?"

Niki narrowed her eyes at the man on screen.

Tubbo paled at the words, backing away until he was pressed up against the side of the cavern.

Dream tilted his head, staring Tommy down further.

**“You thought I was your friend, Tommy.” He grinned, “The both of you did.”**

**The blond stumbled back slightly, shaking his head. His eyes stung with unshed tears, and his hands shook.**

“This guy is just fucking pathetic, dude,” Jack scoffed, gesturing towards the screen, “I mean these are just two *kids*! What does he have to brag about!?”

“Are you insinuating that manipulating me *isn't* a feat worth bragging about, Jack Manifold?” Tubbo demanded, snickering slightly as Ranboo elbowed him in the ribs.

The bald man blanched, eyes widening.

“Uh...”

Quackity laughed loudly.

**“I made sure no one showed up at your party.” Dream let out an amused huff, “I did it so that you wouldn’t have any friends except for me.”**

**Tommy shook his head again, clamping his hands over his ears with gritted teeth.**

**Tubbo looked over, confused.**

*Now I know*, he thought to himself, chest tightening.

**“The reason I *have* the discs is because I blew up the community house and framed Tommy!” The masked man continued, “And you were dumb enough to give me them!”**

Many of them cringed at that. Because despite hearing it from Drista, it felt all the more real seeing Dream admit to it.

Sapnap and George looked as if they were going to be sick.

**The pools of lava bubbled and popped, glowing in the dark. Tubbo stared, mouth agape.**

**“You... You *what?*” He demanded, shoulders shaking.**

**“You’re a fucking psychopath, Dream.” Tommy spat, eyes red-rimmed. He moved to summon something, *anything* to fight with from his inventory, but it was completely barren.**

**“Hmm...” Dream tilted his head, “I mean personally I wouldn’t say that...” He turned to the side, looking back at the two and nodding for them to follow, “Just- just come this way.”**

**They watched as he strode over to the cavern wall, pushing down on something they couldn’t see in the dark. The ground beneath them began to rumble, and the walls began to move.**

**“He put *way* too much effort into this,” Techno rumbled, “you don’t need a secret entrance if your base is already on a remote island thousands of blocks away.”**

**Light emanated from the entrance that had been revealed, and Tommy’s eyes widened at the sight. He looked back at Tubbo, gripping the boy’s hand tightly.**

**They followed him into the room, staring in awe at the sheer size of it all. Glowstone lined the ceiling, painting it all in a low golden hue.**

**In the center of the room was an obsidian grid with a hole in the middle. Dream walked over to it, looking at them expectantly.**

**“Get in.” He commanded.**

**Almost immediately, Tubbo obliged, stepping onto the grid.**

**Tommy stared at him in shock.**

***“Tubbo!”* He cried, appalled, “What the hell are you doing!?”**

**Karl couldn’t help but laugh at the interaction and Tubbo looked back at him, raising a brow.**

**The boy in question looked up, smiling sheepishly as he curled in on himself.**

**“We’re dead either way,” He shrugged, “Might as well comply.”**

**The blond watched as Tubbo stood obediently in place, turning his head to look at Dream; who was waiting expectantly. With a sigh, he resigned, stepping foot onto the platform.**

**The masked man himself stepped into it, and Tommy recoiled at the proximity.**

**Sam glared.**

**With a switch of the lever to their right, the sound of hundreds of cogs turning could be heard. All around them beneath their feet was intricate redstone work lining the walls.**

**Tubbo's eyes widened as he cocked his head, curious.**

**The platform beneath them began to descend, and Tommy felt the pit in his stomach grow further as they plummeted into darkness.**

**"What the fuck is happening!?" He demanded, staggering at the harsh movements and barely regaining his footing, leaning on Tubbo for support.**

**Dream let out a content sigh, shoulders dropping. He turned to look at the youngest.**

**"Ever since you joined my server," He began, "you've been a headache."**

**"Well," Jack began, "he's not exactly *wrong*."**

**Technoblade snorted.**

**The ground beneath their feet continued to lower, and soon they found themselves sinking into a *much* larger room crafted out of blackstone. Tommy and Tubbo alike screamed, horrified.**

**"The grand reveal." Ranboo muttered, completely monotone. Tubbo stifled a laugh.**

**"But everything bad you brought?" Dream tilted his head, "it was because of *attachment*." He gestured widely, throwing his arms out, "Your attachment to the discs, your attachment to Henry, to pets, to land, to friends, to countries, to items... alright?"**

**Tommy didn't dare speak, heart lurching in his throat and at a loss for words. He could barely breathe, heart hammering.**

**At the end of the room up against the wall sat a large Nether portal, and flanked at both sides were shrines dedicated to the discs; crafted from gold and glistening in the low light.**

“He’s fucking *obsessed*, dude.” Quackity shook his head, “All Tommy did was keep them in an ender chest because he wanted to actually *listen* to them... What the fuck is all this?”

“The shrines aren’t even centered if that makes you feel better.” Tubbo offered.

“It makes me feel worse for some reason actually.”

**“That’s the one good thing you’ve done.” Dream told him, “You brought attachment to this server, and- and it took me a while to figure it out... how important attachment truly is.” He muttered, “But when I did,” he smiled, “it made me *stronger!*”**

**Tubbo took a weary step closer to his friend, frowning deeply.**

**“I realized that you’re important, Tommy.” The masked man said, looking over at the shrines. He stepped off the platform onto the large stairs leading off of it, “Come look.” He ordered. “Your discs are here, they’re right here.”**

“I’ve changed my mind,” Technoblade declared, “Dream doesn’t deserve prison.”

Many people turned to look at him, ready to quite literally physically *fight*, but he smirked.

“He deserves a straight-jacket and a psychiatric facility.” He finished.

Jack let out an amused huff.

Slowly, they approached the golden builds, staring in shock.

“There’s enderchests...” Tommy muttered, furrowing his brow, “right there.” He looked over at them, hands itching at his sides. Both discs sat completely unguarded beside two ender chests.

“I mean yeah,” Dream let out a low laugh, “you can run and throw the discs in if you want... But I mean- *I* wouldn’t. Cause then y’know... I’ll kill Tubbo.”

The youngest took a shaky breath, staring back at his friend, and felt bile rising in his throat. The discs were *right there*. They were completely within his reach, and there was nothing he could do.

“Low blow...” Sapnap muttered.

Dream stalked off towards the second one, staring down at it, and though Tommy couldn’t see his face he knew it was one of delight.

“I cut all my attachments,” He murmured, still looking down, mesmerized by the discs, “I blew up my house, I lost my friends, I lost my items, lost my crossbow, my... y’know everything that was important to me; *my pets*.” He chuckled quietly, “I cut everything because I realized that’s what gave everyone power over each other. And the only reason you’re even here is because I have these dumb little items.”

“You...” Tubbo trailed off, looking up in horror.

“I lost everything,” Dream shook his head, “but... I *had* to lose everything,” he peered up, staring at Tommy, “so I could gain everything.”

“And you *chose* to do that, asshole!” Quackity screamed at the screen.

**“You’re a sick bastard.” Tommy spat, glaring harshly. He stepped back, shaking his head.**

**“*Listen*,” The masked man urged, a manic grin spreading across his face, “if I can control the things that people are attached to... then I can control the server again!” He exclaimed loudly, puffing out his chest and spreading his arms out, “Because this isn’t the *Tommy* SMP or the *Tubbo* SMP, it’s the *Dream* SMP! ...Right?”**

Puffy recoiled at the words, making a face.

“He used to say it was *our* SMP...” Sapnap said quietly, a sad smile on his face.

**The teens looked down at the gold plating they stood upon, blanching. The grandiose paintings of the discs loomed over them, plastered up against the walls.**

**“So I can *control* the server, okay?” Dream laughed, “If I have everything that everyone cares about, then I can make things go back to how they used to!”**

George frowned at that, looking down at the ground. Did he *want* things to go back to how they used to? Well... yeah. In the beginning, everyone had been friends, in the beginning things had been okay.

But George looked at Tommy before him, at Tommy who was sleeping, who still had tear tracks on his face, and felt bile rise in his throat.

He would rather have things never go back to how they were than have Tommy be hurt like that.

**Tubbo cocked his head to the side, staring at Tommy. He frowned deeply, hunching in on himself.**



**Tommy, however, took an angry step forward, gritting his teeth and tensing his shoulders.**

**“This server was *shit* before, Dream.” He hissed, “I-”**

**“Follow me.” Dream interrupted, swiveling around. He didn’t bother to look back, waltzing over to the large hall to their right. “I want you two to see this.”**

**For a moment, neither teen moved, staring at one another wearily. The other man had already disappeared around the corner, and they felt dread pooling in their stomachs.**

**Finally, Tubbo made the move to follow, and Tommy pursed his lips, following with a furrowed brow and anxious pout.**

**The hall before them was decorated top to bottom in item frames. They were all labeled, some empty but others filled. The items ranged from weapons to pets, and at the very end of the hall was a fenced area, containing a blue sheep and a small cow.**

**“Not that stupid fucking hallway...” Quackity muttered, narrowing his eyes.**

**“I have a place for everything!” Dream cried, spinning circles as he laughed, “And I’m going to get everything!”**

**Tubbo snorted, thinking about the fact that the hall was empty now.**

**Tommy looked over, a pit forming in his stomach as he stared at the empty frame before him.**

**“The axe of peace?” He whispered, eyes wide.**

**“Oh!” Dream chirped, hurrying over, “That reminds me!” He shuffled around in his inventory, removing the axe and placing it carefully in the spot on the wall, “there we go!”**

Techno’s ear twitched.

**The youngest watched it for a moment, horrified, before his attention was dragged away.**

**Dream continued to go down the line, listing things that he either already had or was going to get. He seemed rather happy with himself, almost giddy.**

**“You’re fucking crazy...” Tommy muttered, shaking his head.**

**And then, near the very end, they stopped, and neither teen could hold back their initial laughter at the sight of a cage labeled *Skeppy*. Quickly, however, it turned to horror when they realized it was a genuine thing.**

**“What the *fuck!*?” Tubbo cried, stepping back with wide eyes.**

**“I forgot about that...” Puffy whispered. The thought of Dream taking Skeppy, of putting him in that *tiny* cage and leaving him there to rot made her feel sick.**

**“He’s a fucking freak,” Fundy spat, “Seriously.”**

**The admin didn’t look at all perturbed, moving closer and running a hand against the bars.**

**“That’s the one thing Bad cares about.” He huffed, amused.**

“Not true.” Quackity scoffed.

Sapnap looked hopeful for a moment before realizing the duck hybrid was talking about *himself*. He rolled his eyes, ignoring the way his fiance snickered at the reaction.

**Tubbo and Tommy looked at each other, moving closer in an attempt to fabricate some sort of illusion of safety; to somehow ignore the fact that this man who was so *vile* was standing before them.**

**Both of them began to spew profanities at him, crying out at how terrible he was, but he didn't seem bothered.**

**Letting out an agitated groan, Tommy ran a shaky hand through his hair and swiveled on his feet, trying to turn away and block out everything in front of him.**

**Instead, he was brought face to face with an old friend.**

**Tommy froze in his tracks, completely still. His breath hitched in his throat and he made a choked sort of noise.**

**A young bull stared at him, eyes wide and curious. His horns were still coming in, one of them chipped slightly. *The left one*. On his back was an arrangement of spots and speckles that Tommy could have recognized anywhere.**

Niki's heart leapt, something she hadn't been expecting to happen, but she remembered how she'd stood by Tommy's side throughout Henry's death, how she'd held him as he cried, how she'd helped him build a grave, and her stomach sank.

“...Who is that?” Puffy asked sheepishly.

“Henry,” Sam said quietly, still staring at the screen, “he was Tommy's cow.”

**“This isn’t real,” he shook his head, turning back to look at Dream, hands shaking, “this isn’t *fucking* real!” He cried.**

**Dream stalked over, not saying a word.**

**“I watched Henry die,” Tommy said, heart pumping loudly in his chest, “This isn’t...”**

Sapnap felt his chest tighten slightly.

**Beside them Tubbo was staring in shock at the blue sheep; its coat a deep lapis and its eyes holding that same caring shine.**

**“I mean...” Dream began, “Did you really?” He tilted his head, “was that the real Henry? Who knows...”**

“It was.” Sapnap narrowed his eyes, “It was the real Henry.”

“I mean... guess we know the resurrection book works.” Fundy hummed, going quiet for a moment before the realization hit him. He looked over at Tommy, eyes widening. “Wait fuck. Nevermind.”

**Tommy was very quiet, staring at the cow. His fists clenched at his side, memories of gore and carnage flooding through his mind. He whirled around, mouth curved into a snarl.**

**“You’re a fucking psychopath!” He spat, taking a step forward.**

**“I’m *not!*” Dream denied, shaking his head, and he sounded almost... *tired*. “Everything I do is deliberate!” He took a step back, adjusting his mask and pressing it**

down, “I... *need* control... okay?”

“I’ve met at least three other people with control issues who didn’t abuse a kid but I dunno, maybe it’s just me.” Karl mumbled quietly to himself.

Tommy looked back at Tubbo, at his best friend who was completely defenseless, who Dream could kill at any moment, and then to the two animals behind him, curious and sweet and confused.

“Why?” He demanded, tears pricking at his eyes, “This isn’t- it’s not *fair*.”

Phil’s heart broke at those words, his wings puffing up.

Technoblade looked over, slightly surprised at the reaction. His father had been both silent and still for quite a while.

And he felt like a child at that moment, whining about things being unfair; whining to the man who wanted to *kill* Tubbo that it wasn’t fair, but he couldn’t help it. He was just so *done*, and as simplistic and crude as it sounded he was *sad*.

“Because it’s *not* fair!” Dream cried, “It’s my server!”

Tommy swallowed back a sob, fists clenching at his sides. He felt so *helpless*.

Quackity grit his teeth, glaring angrily at the screen.

“But Tommy, listen,” the masked man continued, taking a step closer, “I need you, okay?” He grinned, “I need you because you keep bringing attachment to this server. Without you, people weren’t really... attached to things.” He paused, “But then you came and you brought friendship and countries and things people could be attached

**to... *You* brought that. You're the key." He smiled, "You're the key to unlocking the full potential of the server."**

"...Am I the only person that doesn't understand the whole 'attachment' shit?" Jack asked quietly. "Like... What does he *mean* by that?"

"He means love." Sam replied, "He means that Tommy brought love to the server. When he says that Tommy brought attachments he's saying that Tommy made things worth loving, that he loved things and it encouraged the people around him to start loving things too."

"You've thought about this a lot, huh?" Fundy questioned jokingly.

The creeper only glared before continuing. "Dream is scared of the things he loves being used against him, and because Tommy *is* love, because Tommy brings love wherever he goes, Dream wants to use that against people."

"Oh..."

**Tubbo shuffled nervously behind the blond, staring up at his face and frowning. He took a shaky breath, moving closer.**

**"So I can't kill you," Dream hummed, "but I constructed a prison. It's inescapable, you can't get out. There's hundreds of thousands of stacks of obsidian, there's elder guardians, there's *guards* ..."**

"And how'd that work out for you?" Quackity smirked, earning a laugh from Tubbo.

**Tommy tried not to shiver at the thought, shaking his head.**

**"How?" He demanded.**

**“Lots of time.” The admin shrugged, as though it were simple. “A bit of effort, planning, construction... y’know... ” He paused, mouth stretching into a wide grin beneath his mask, “evil.”**

“He paid me is how.” Sam narrowed his eyes, “there wasn’t- there wasn’t *evil* put into the prison until he became the prisoner. That’s a ridiculous response.”

Puffy let out an amused huff.

**Tommy’s face morphed into an expression of disgust as he backed away. Tubbo seemed lost, unsure of what to do.**

**“So you are evil,” the youngest said, narrowing his eyes. He looked back at the pens and stared sadly at Henry. Friend stared at him almost knowingly.**

**“Well...” Dream began, “Evil is in the eye of the beholder, isn’t it? I mean... you’re evil to me.”**

“Teenager says the man who abused him is evil, man says that evil is subjective and that this scrawny teenager who still says *poggers* and collects bugs is the depiction of evil to him.” Fundy said point blank.

Though the comment was supposed to be funny, at least, that was Fundy’s intention, it only served to make the interaction between the two on the screen all the more awful to watch.

**Tommy scoffed, but Tubbo laughed, and it caught the other two off guard.**

**“It’s like the tower from Lego; Batman with the eye on top.” He whispered to his friend, and the blond made a face, trying not to laugh.**

Ranboo furrowed his brow, looking down at his husband. Tubbo laughed loudly.

Dream tried to continue, sighing deeply and moving on. “You came onto the server,” He began, ignoring the way the two were now *smiling*, “thinking that you were the hero, but-”

“You make everything better, Tubbo.” Tommy grinned, completely disregarding Dream and still holding back laughter, “That was good it was.” He giggled.

Tubbo smiled softly at the screen, still amused by his own joke.

The masked man stopped in his tracks, staring at the teens.

“Sorry sorry sorry...” Tubbo apologized, calming himself, still grinning like a fool.

“No no no,” Tommy shook his head, “you lightened the atmosphere. I liked it.” He beamed, “When we’re all feeling down, you make us feel better.”

The ram hybrid’s chest tightened at that, and he looked over at his sleeping friend.

*I wish I could do that for you now.*

Dream shook his head, muttering something unintelligible to himself before pushing forward, looking at the older teen.

“*Tubbo*,” He began seriously, and it was enough to bring the other two back to the moment at hand, “I’m gonna lock Tommy away forever! I need him alive but that doesn’t mean I need him *free*.” He cocked his head, turning to meet Tommy’s gaze, “When you were in exile it was *perfect*.”



Many of them cringed at that, and Quackity saw red, seething at the screen.

Tommy seized, eyes going wide.

**“People could visit you... the only problem was that you could escape... and you did! I was fine with you being in exile, but the thing is that you left. You ruined it. It was supposed to be *perfect*.”**

Tubbo furrowed his brow, looking at his friend, a silent question on his tongue. *What happened in exile?*

**“The prison wasn’t meant for you originally,” Dream took a step closer, “but now it is.”**

The boy in question didn’t have it in him to react, standing completely still with tears pricking at his eyes, breathing heavily.

**“...Who was it meant for originally?” Tubbo questioned quietly, a tremor in his voice.**

**“Eh,” The admin shrugged, “you don’t need to know.”**

**And then Tommy snapped from his stupor, gasping slightly and shaking his head. He backed away, pressing up against the fence before breaking into a sprint. Tubbo followed immediately after him and they raced down the hall.**

Puffy’s heart broke as she watched the boy run. He looked so *scared*.

**Tommy grabbed the Axe of Peace with both hands, ripping it from its place on the wall and nearly being brought to the ground by its weight. He shook his head again, heart hammering and panting heavily.**

**“You can’t,” He muttered, stumbling over his own feet “You can’t lock me up I’ll- *I’ll fucking kill you!*” He cried, blinking away his tears as he held the axe out, desperately trying to keep the man away.**

“Dammit...” Quackity whispered, wiping at his good eye and gritting his teeth. Tears continued to prick at it regardless.

**Tubbo watched from behind him worriedly, completely incapable of helping.**

**Dream, however, didn’t speak. Wordlessly, he surged forward, using the way Tommy flinched at the movement to sidestep around him and hook an arm around Tubbo’s throat.**

**Instantly, Tommy froze, and Tubbo let out a terrified cry.**

Ranboo reached for Tubbo’s hand again, and this time the latter squeezed back, a soft expression on his face.

**Without a word, without hesitation, the youngest ran back to the wall, heaving the axe up and placing it back in its frame. He looked back at his friend in horror, pursing his lips.**

**Dream released Tubbo, pushing the boy away roughly.**

**“*Tommy!*” He cried, as though he’d finally lost his cool, “I need you alive! I *don’t* need Tubbo alive!”**

“He yells so much...” Technoblade noted, “Cringe.”

“You’re fucking cringe...” Quackity muttered quietly, arms crossed and a bitter expression on his face. Karl held back a laugh.

“Can everyone just *shut up?*” Ranboo demanded, taking them all aback.

It was clear watching the screen was hurting him, with Tommy asleep on his shoulder and Tubbo at his side he seemed to barely be making it through.

No one replied.

**The vault went quiet, and Tommy turned his head to the side, looking at Tubbo as his heart sank. Dream waltzed over to the older teen, grinning.**

**“Tubbo isn’t *fun* like you are,” The admin hummed, “Tubbo’s a *pawn*, he’s a follower. I’ve used him as much as I can but-”**

Jack made a face, feeling sick.

*Fun?*

**“He is *not* a follower,” Tommy hissed, surging forwards and pushing Dream back, standing between him and Tubbo. “He was the *president!* ”**

Tubbo’s heart swelled at that, and he smiled softly.

**Dream threw his head back, laughing loudly. “He was a president second in command to Quackity and Fundy! To Everyone who told him what to do!” He calmed slightly, taking a breath, “But I’ve already been over this. He’s a follower.”**

Quackity and Fundy looked at one another, frowning.

Tommy narrowed his eyes, pushing Tubbo even farther behind him and balling his fists.

**“Tubbo’s not a *fucking* follower!”** He spat, and the older teen was taken aback by the animosity, **“you need him as much as you need me!”**

**“I don’t!”** Dream shook his head, **“I-”**

**“You do!”** Tommy pressed further, shoulders shaking, **“Because without Tubbo what am I?”** He demanded, shoving the man in the chest angrily.

“...He does know he’s his own person... right?” Puffy asked, looking concerned.

“Pretty much every memory we’ve seen points to no.” Technoblade replied, “I’m like, ninety-nine percent sure this guy just thinks he exists for Tubbo and nothing else.”

Tubbo swallowed thickly, shifting uncomfortably.

The admin went stumbling back, but didn’t retaliate. He straightened upwards, looking down at the blond.

And normally that was where Tommy would shrink back. Normally after lashing out like that an absolute fear would overcome him and he’d be brought to his knees, groveling and begging for forgiveness, to not be hurt, but with Tubbo behind him, he had no choice but to stand tall.

**“Look,”** Dream sighed, running a hand through his hair, **“you want to be the hero, right?”** He questioned, **“And every hero needs an origin story! Batman had his parents, Spider-Man had Uncle Ben, and you... *You* can have Tubbo!”** He cheered excitedly.

Ranboo paled, looking down at his husband. Tubbo merely smiled at him, squeezing his clawed hand for what felt like the thousandth time to assure him he was there.

“Sick bastard...” Quackity muttered.

**Instantly, Tommy’s face dropped, and he stared at the man in horror. His hands itched at his sides, and he heard a faint ringing in his ears. He turned to look back at Tubbo, tears pricking at his eyes.**

**“No,” He began, breathing growing heavier, “absolutely *fucking* not.” He denied.**

**He stared at Dream for a moment, not willing to believe it, but when he looked down he was met with the sight of a sword in the man’s hand.**

**Tommy choked on a gasp, grabbing Tubbo’s hand and *sprinting* towards the main room. He looked desperately at the portal, and then to the elevator where they’d come in. He craned his neck up to the ceiling, feeling bile rise in his throat.**

Despite knowing that help was on the way, despite knowing the two were alive in front of them, the people in the room felt dread pooling in their stomachs.

**“Are we trapped here?” He thought aloud, looking at Tubbo in a panic.**

**Dream meandered behind them, casually strolling and letting his sword drag across the Blackstone.**

Sam narrowed his eyes.

**Tommy hit himself on the head, *hard*, before looking to the nether portal. He stared down at his and Tubbo’s intertwined hands, gaze going back to the portal.**

**“Don’t go through there~” The admin called from behind them, a lilt in his tone.**

Quackity grit his teeth at the call, clenching his fists tightly.

**The two froze completely, staring at him.**

**“...Why?” Tubbo asked quietly, hands shaking.**

**Dream walked over slowly to the portal, stepping in front of them. “Because that’s *my* way home.”**

**Tommy grit his teeth, stepping in front of Tubbo once more.**

**“What if we do?” He demanded, “What are you going to do if we go through?”**

**“I’ll kill you before you reach the other side.” Dream said simply.**

And once again, despite knowing the outcome, the audience felt helpless.

**And those words sent a tremor through Tommy, reminding him of a time not too far back.**

***“What would you do if I went through the portal?” He asked, staring up at Dream.***

***“I would kill you.” The man replied without hesitation, tone light and jovial.***

**“Tommy,” Dream began, “I want to give you your chance to say goodbye.”**

Tubbo frowned.

**The blond looked at him, tensing and clutching Tubbo’s hand tighter. He took a shaky breath before steeling himself over.**

**“I’m not going to say goodbye,” he shook his head, “we’re going to get out of here. We always do, okay? Every time we-”**

**“It’s Tubbo’s time to go.” The admin interrupted, a sense of finality in his words, “Just say your goodbye.”**

**Tommy stared in horror, and Tubbo paled dramatically, looking close to tears.**

**“No!” Tommy shrieked, “I’m not fucking letting that happen I-”**

**“Tommy!” Dream cried angrily, spitting the words out, “You’re going to miss out on your one chance to say goodbye to your best friend!” He screamed. “I’m not kidding!”**

The people in the room recoiled at the volume, and Tubbo felt his chest seize.

**Both teens flinched back at the harsh tone, but the man quickly smoothed over, relaxing his body language and peeling away from them.**

**“Say your goodbyes, okay?” He tilted his head, voice coated in honey, “I’ll be waiting over here.”**

**Tubbo pulled on Tommy's sleeve, looking at the boy sadly and urging him to follow. They retreated to the corner of the room, and Dream stood watching them from afar.**

**"He's not gonna kill you," were the first words that left Tommy's mouth, a frantic look in his eyes, "he's not. You've seen the way he deceives people he's not gonna do shit-" he laughed, manic almost, "I'll tell you what we're going to do, okay? We're going to run back to the portal. We'll run through and back to my place. We'll-"**

**"We'll be dead before we get to the portal," Tubbo interrupted him softly, staring at the back wall, "too much of a distance." He smiled sadly.**

Ranboo went still.

The others watched, completely quiet.

**Tommy stopped, snapping his mouth shut and staring at his friend quietly. His face was completely monotone, as though it were a slate wiped clean. He didn't dare say a word.**

**Tubbo continued.**

**"It's alright," he began, misty-eyed, "we had some laughs. It was fun while it lasted."**

**"...What?"**

Tubbo flinched, looking up at his husband wearily.

**"It's not- I don't-"**



“You’re just *accepting* it?” Ranboo questioned, eyes narrowed dangerously. For some reason that seemed to set off a switch in Tubbo’s brain.

“*Not* because I want to!” He cried back angrily, “I already told you! I want to *live*! I’m serious! I didn’t want to die!”

“Then why did you go along with it!?” Ranboo demanded.

“Because I’m not a fucking idiot!” Tubbo yelled, “Because we quite literally had no options left! I’m not some fucking dumbass who lets emotions control my decisions, okay!? There was no way we were getting out of there, Ranboo!”

The enderman’s lips thinned into a line, and he looked down at his husband.

He opened his mouth to speak but was instead interrupted.

*“If you two don’t stop fucking yelling you’re going to wake Tommy up!”* Quackity hissed in a whisper, glaring at the two.

Ranboo looked back down at where the blond was sleeping, noticing the way Tommy’s brows had been drawn together only after they’d begun yelling. He sighed deeply, running his free hand through the younger’s hair.

Tubbo looked similarly apologetic, watching with a frown.

**The younger of the two pinched his brows together at that, looking pained.**

**“Why have you just accepted it?” Tommy demanded. He gripped the shorter’s shoulders tightly, shaking.**

Tubbo ignored the way Ranboo looked over at him at the words.

**“We’ve been backed into a corner, Tommy.” Tubbo laughed quietly, “There’s nowhere to run, nowhere to hide... this is it. This is checkmate.”**

And as much as anyone hated to admit it, that was what it looked like. No escape, no armour, nothing. The two were completely defenseless.

**Tommy bowed his head, pressing his and Tubbo’s foreheads together like he had a million times over. Tears dripped down the bridge of his nose, falling to the floor.**

**Tubbo cried silently, not indulging in the way that Tommy sniffled and whined.**

A pang went through Ranboo’s chest at the sight, not only at seeing the two people that mattered most to him crying, but because he realized that Tubbo was crying because he really hadn’t wanted to die.

**“All good things must come to an end.” He smiled, tilting his head sympathetically.**

**The blond’s grip dropped from Tubbo’s shoulders, and the latter clasped Tommy’s hands gently in his own, holding them up. Those hands had once been so soft and clean, but they were now littered with scars, though he supposed he couldn’t say much; as he’d lost three of his fingers during his execution.**

**He couldn’t help the laugh that escaped him, however, even as he cried, because Tommy’s hands had always been so cold, and yet in that moment they were all the warmth Tubbo had ever needed.**

Tubbo felt tears welling in his eyes at the memory, and looked over at where Tommy was sleeping.

Puffy didn't manage to hold back her cries, sobbing quietly.

**He placed a soft kiss on the tip of Tommy's curled fingers, giggling softly through the tears, and the younger made a strangled sort of noise, shaking his head and letting out an ugly sob. He sniffled loudly, ugly crying.**

***"What am I without you?"* He whispered, shoulders shaking as he hunched in on himself.**

"This kid..." Fundy began in a somewhat joking manner, though his eyes were red-rimmed.

Tubbo felt tears begin to slip down his cheeks, and he wiped at his nose with his sleeve, crying quietly.

As soon as Tommy woke up he'd tell him he was everything and *more* without him, that Tommy was his own person and he was wonderful and he was love and he was life and he was *so* good even without him.

**A pang went through Tubbo's heart at that, and he felt more tears roll down his cheeks. He smiled again, making sure Tommy was looking at him.**

**"Yourself." He said simply, as though it was everything Tommy would ever need to know.**

**Tommy nearly keeled over, sobbing through grit teeth, and Tubbo squeezed his hands a little tighter.**

Phil pursed his lips at the cries, watching sadly.

**"Are you..." The youngest began, eyes red and puffy and cheeks rosy, "You're okay with this?"**

**Tubbo let out a sad huff, reminiscing for just a moment before nodding quietly. “We said our goodbyes at the start, y’know.” He said gently, “It’ll be alright.”**

Ranboo felt a pricking at his eyes.

**Tommy took a moment to calm himself, looking into his friend’s eyes with his own greying tired ones.**

**“Tubbo,” he began, voice low, “even though for this entire server as my sidekick, really Tubbo, I was your sidekick,” he laughed hollowly, eyes welling up once more, “*Please don’t go.*” He whispered, and when he blinked his tears fell with him, streaming down his face.**

Jack frowned at that, feeling his chest tighten.

**The ram hybrid let go of Tommy’s hands, carefully placing a hand on his shoulder instead and squeezing it once.**

**“It’s okay.” He managed.**

**And just like that he moved, sidestepping Tommy and beginning his walk towards Dream, his walk towards *death*. Tommy felt as if all the air had been sucked from his lungs, and despite it all, despite what had just been said, he felt himself following after. Dream looked rather pleased with himself, watching Tubbo approach.**

**They were interrupted, however, by the nether portal activating.**

**Tommy blinked, taken aback by the sudden action, and narrowed his eyes, trying to see through the purple and pink hues that muddled his vision.**

**Punz stepped through the gates, trident in hand, dressed fully in netherite and sporting a grin. Tubbo looked back at Tommy, shocked.**

“Oh thank god,” Karl sighed, exasperated.

They knew how it went from there on out. Tommy got his win, Tommy would *finally* get his win.

**“*Punz?*” Dream demanded, taking a hesitant step back.**

**“I’m sorry Dream,” The mercenary smirked, “but you should have paid me more.”**

**With that, other members of the server began to appear, all fully geared and with determined looks upon their faces. Almost instantly, their gazes met the two completely defenseless teens. Tubbo laughed incredulously, completely blown away.**

“*Yes!*” Fundy cried, being loudly shushed by the others only seconds later.

For many of them, it was their first time appearing on screen, and they stared in awe.

**“You came!” Tommy cheered, grinning so wide it made his face hurt. He looked to Tubbo, and saw the sword in Dream’s hands, instantly paling.**

**“Tubbo,” he began, grabbing the older’s hand, “Tubbo *behind!*” He pulled the boy along with him, running for the crowd for help.**

**Dream stalked after them, raising his weapon, but was promptly pushed back by an axe meeting his chestplate. It clanged loudly, though not as loud as usual. It was a warning.**

**Sapnap stood before him, one arm protectively outstretched across Tubbo and Tommy and the other wielding an axe.**

Quackity grabbed the blaze hybrid by the shoulders, shaking him excitedly.

“That’s our Sapnap!” He cheered, grinning wide.

**“Step away from them,” He commanded, taking another step forward and glaring at the masked man. Instantly, the server members flocked to the front, pushing the teens behind them.**

**They advanced on Dream, pushing him back farther and farther, and he looked to be confused, as if he didn’t know what was going on.**

**Quackity took a step forward, face contorted into an angry snarl. “You fucked up, Dream.” He hissed.**

*“Yeah, he fucking did!”* Quackity cried, cheering on the past version of himself.

Sam smiled, amused.

**Behind them all, Tubbo and Tommy screamed excitedly, running and jumping around and hugging one another.**

**“Hey guys!” Tommy cried out, “Hey guys it wasn’t me who blew up the community house, it was *him!*”**

**“Caught in 4K bitch!” Tubbo cheered, pumping a fist into the air.**

They laughed at the antics, watching happily as the two teens continued to scream and hug and run around.

**The others continued to advance, closing in and pushing Dream back till he was standing at the front of the hall.**

**“What’re you all doing here?” He asked quietly. Tubbo and Tommy grinned at one another.**

**“We’re tired of your shit.” Jack muttered, narrowing his eyes. The people around him nodded, looking equally as upset.**

**Ponk strode forward, staring down the hall. “What is this?” He demanded, gesturing vaguely. “Huh?”**

**Dream didn’t reply, completely silent.**

**“Cat got your tongue?” The doctor grinned, leaning in slightly.**

**“Such a good fucking line.” Jack hummed.**

**“This isn’t a TV show.” Puffy snorted, laughing at him.**

**Tommy took Tubbo’s hand in his own, squeezing it once before breaking away. He walked over quietly, making his way to the front of the crowd. Sapnap stood at the forefront, staring Dream down. Tommy walked past him, forcing the masked man to back away even further down the hall.**

**“Sapnap, could you hand me a pickaxe please?” He asked, looking back. The man in question obliged, passing a netherite pick wordlessly.**

**Tommy took a deep breath, looking over at the Axe of Peace on the wall.**

**“You know what, Dream? You son of a bitch,” He wrenched it from its frame, adrenaline rushing through his veins, “you told me *everything*,” he spat, “you said I’m too important to kill.” he shook his head, “so even now, you’re not gonna fucking kill me.”**

**He stared at the admin for a moment, looking him up and down. “You don’t have the guts.”**

**“Yes!”** Karl all but screamed, jumping into the air. Quackity couldn’t help the laugh that escaped him, legs bouncing with energy.

**Behind him, the others watched, completely silent.**

**Tommy stared down at the ground. For a moment he was quiet and unmoving, but he quickly began to mine the blackstone. He looked back up at Dream, eyes narrowed.**

**“Put your armour in the hole.”**

George grinned to himself. Beside him, however, the three others in his row were off the rails completely, giggling and cheering and all but parading around.

Tommy groaned in his sleep, muttering something unintelligible and curling further into Ranboo’s arm.

The enderman looked back at them, glaring harshly.

**“Sorry...”** Karl whispered sheepishly.



**“Tommy...” Dream started, trailing off quietly.**

**The blond dropped the axe, letting it clatter to the ground. The sound echoed throughout the vault.**

**“Hey Dream,” He grinned, “Kill me.” He spread out both his arms, leaving himself completely defenseless, but Dream only stared.**

Shivers ran up Puffy’s spine as she watched.

“I hate how- how comfortable he is just doing that.” She muttered, “He should still be careful.”

**They stood in silence for what felt like could have been hours, but finally, Dream moved, and ever so slowly, dropped his armour into the hole. Tommy couldn’t help the grin that spread across his face, or the shocked gasp he let out, staring with wide eyes.**

And all across the room, they were *euphoric*.

Hours of watching Tommy being beaten black and blue, of watching him lose everything, it all led up to this moment; they had finally gotten their win.

**“Thank you!” He chirped, jumping into the hole. He quickly picked it all up, shoveling it into his arms and stowing it away. Distantly, he heard Tubbo laughing at him before he pulled himself out.**

**Tommy stared in shock at his inventory, the edges of his mouth curving upwards as he dressed himself in the netherite. He laughed quietly, unable to quell his ever-growing smile.**

**“You fucked up for the last time, Dream.” He shook his head.**

A pit formed in Sam’s stomach at those words, but he tried to ignore it, pursing his lips.

**The man somehow still looked terrifying in every sense of the word. Despite the fact that he truly was just a human man it didn’t take away the horror Tommy felt just thinking about him.**

**Even with all his armour gone, Dream was still the man that had beaten him.**

**“Tommy,” The masked man began, tilting his head, “listen, I’m not gonna kill you and I know you’re not gonna kill me.”**

**“Why would I not kill you?” Tommy asked, eyes wide and void. His grin had fallen, and he stared at the man with a completely passive face.**

Technoblade couldn’t help but shudder at the expression. He’d never seen Tommy look so.. *blank*.

**Dream seemed to regain some of his initial flare, grinning beneath the mask. “Because we have so much *fun* together.”**

Ranboo grit his teeth, feeling the particles around him grow more dense. He looked down at Tommy, watching the boy carefully.

Tubbo shivered beside him.

**Tommy recoiled at that, glaring harshly.**

**“Dream,” he began, “you have brought me nothing but pain. And now?” He cocked his head to the side, looking down at the axe in his hand, at *Nightmare*, “it’s your turn.”**

Jack leaned forward in his seat, watching with anticipation.

**He brought the axe up, and Dream stumbled back, terrified, but it was all over in one fell swoop. With one clean motion, the axe was buried inside of the man’s skull, sending him toppling to the ground.**

*“Let’s fucking go!”* Sapnap rallied, exhilarated.

Tommy whined quietly at the loud noise, frowning. Ranboo held him a little tighter, unable to keep the smile off of his face after what happened on screen.

Tubbo turned around to shush them all once more.

**He heard the shocked exclams from the people behind him, and tried not to focus on it, instead watching as the body slowly dissolved. Soon, there was nothing but *Nightmare* and a pool of blood on the blackstone left.**

**Tommy swiveled around, face splattered with blood and a dead look in his eyes. He grabbed the axe once more, parting the crowd as he walked through it.**

A few of them recoiled at the sight, and they realized with heavy hearts that the task was still emotionally taxing for Tommy, and that taking the life of someone you once loved, and in such a brutal way, no doubt had him reeling.

**“Where is he?” He demanded, taking a shaky breath.**

**The people around him shuffled awkwardly, unsure of what to do or where to go.**

**“Dream?” He called out, staring up at the elevator, “Get down here. I am going to *fucking* kill you until you’re dead.”**

*If only you had...* Sam thought to himself, frowning deeply.

**For a moment, there was nothing, but slowly, the pistons began to move, and ever so carefully, Dream descended upon it. He was quiet, standing hunched in on himself, and when he finally reached the bottom, Tommy revealed a crossbow.**

**“With your own bow.” The blond grinned, pulling back and aiming between the eyes.**

Fundy grinned.

Phil seemed completely impassive, keeping all his thoughts to himself.

**“Tommy *stop*.” Dream commanded, holding out a hand, “Tommy-” He was cut off by an arrow plunging itself into his side, and he grunted, swearing quietly before ripping it out, throwing the bloody thing to the ground. He held a hand over the wound, staring at Tommy.**

**“No Dream,” Tommy shook his head, “I won’t.” He laughed, “This is where it ends.” He pulled back, releasing another arrow. It nestled itself in the man’s shoulder.**

**“*Tommy!*” Dream all but screamed, “*Stop it!*”**

**The teen walked up to him, glaring. His lips were pulling into a tight frown, and he stared at the blood soaking through the man’s bright green hoodie. He paused, slinging the crossbow across his back and instead unsheathing his sword.**

**“You have three.” He said simply. Without another word he plunged the sword into the man’s chest, ripping it out.**

Jack laughed, clapping excitedly. Despite all the hate he harbored for Tommy, despite all the anger that still refused to go, he hated Dream a thousand times more.

**Dream fell to the floor, gasping for air and clutching at his chest. Blood coated both the sword and his hands as he curled in on himself before finally going still.**

**Once again, the body disappeared.**

“Get fucked, asshole.” Quackity muttered, smiling wide.

Many of them remembered watching it and thinking that perhaps Tommy had been too violent, perhaps he’d been too merciless.

But after everything they’d seen, they would’ve argued it wasn’t *enough*.

**That time, no one made a sound, only staring quietly. Tommy looked back up at the elevator, narrowing his eyes.**

**“One left.” Tubbo said, not too far away from him.**

**Tommy stared at the top of the elevator, lips pursed.**

***“Dream!”*** He called up the shaft, cupping his hands around his mouth, ***“Come back down!”***

**For a moment it was silent, and then, quietly, Dream responded. “No!” He cried back, and it was almost too quiet for any of them to hear. “I have no reason to!”**

Sam glared at the screen.

**And Tommy stopped at that. He thought carefully to himself, approaching the blackstone stairs. He looked down at his sword.**

**“Dream,” he began, loud enough so that he knew the man could hear it, “either you come down,” he paused, “or I’ll just kill me.”**

Ranboo went rigid, staring down at the sleeping figure resting on him. His heart hammered in his chest.

“Or he’ll *what?*”

**Behind him, the people watched as he raised the sword to his throat, bringing it so close that it drew blood. He stared up, determined.**

Puffy made a pained noise, looking away.

**“You won’t have any more fun.” He spat. “So you come down right *fucking* now, or I’m killing myself.” He pressed the sword even deeper into his skin, blood trailing down his neck.**

Quackity felt anger resurface within him, breathing shakily as he watched. Beside him Sapnap and Karl were still, watching with bated breath.

**There was silence from above, and Tommy watched with unwavering patience completely still.**

“He shouldn’t be so eager...” Jack muttered.

**Behind them all, the portal activated.**

**“Tommy.” A voice called, and the boy in question turned around, lowering his blade. Dream stood at the very back of the room, sweater stained with blood.**

**Slowly, Tommy approached him. He stood still for a moment, staring the man up and down, before moving past him.**

**Wordlessly, he blocked off the portal with obsidian, and Dream moved to push him back.**

**“Hey,” He began, desperately trying to stop him. But Tommy retaliated, pushing him back further with an angry glare. “You’ve punished me enough! You just killed me twice!” The masked man cried.**

Sam glared harshly at the screen. If Dream truly thought two deaths was enough for what he’d put Tommy through he was insane.

**Tommy looked at him, eyes greying. In the back of his mind, there were explosions, there was blood and guts, there was death and desolation. He frowned, grabbing his crossbow and aiming it at the man.**

**“Dream,” he began, “do you have *any* last words?”**

**The people around them were quiet, and perhaps the admin had expected them to help, to step in, but they made no such move.**

**“You don’t have to do this,” Dream shook his head, pleading, “We were friends!”**

**The teenager tensed at that, phantom pains running up and across his arms. He released the shot, grazing the man’s arm.**

Puffy nodded at that, feeling a tightness in her chest.

**“Tommy we were *friends!*” The masked man cried, backing away, but once again the words only proved to aggravate the blond more, and he pulled back the bow once more.**

**“You weren’t his fucking friend.” Quackity seethed.**

**And Dream broke, back pressed up against the wall with wide and terrified eyes, he fell back on a desperate man’s last resort; *bargaining*.**

**“I can bring people back to life!” He yelled, both arms outstretched in a desperate attempt to shield himself, eyes scrunched up tight.**

**When he opened them, however, he found that Tommy had lowered the bow, the entire room having gone completely silent.**

**“Should have taken the shot...” Tubbo muttered, shaking his head.**

**The blond sighed, running a hand through his hair. “All you do is *lie*, man.” He shook his head, “Why should I-”**

**“Just listen!” Dream interrupted, narrowing his eyes and panting heavily, just having narrowly escaped death. “Um- When I- I fought with JSchlatt, he gave me a book, okay? And it- it tells you how to bring people back to life, and only I have the book!” He gestured wildly, “Because he died! He was the only other person that knew!”**



They all knew the story, remembered it well.

The only thing about watching it back, however, was that they now sat in a room with *proof* of the revival book.

**“This is *such* a fucking lie dude,” Tommy muttered, “you-”**

**“Tommy!” The admin all but screamed, “*If I die then death is permanent!*” He paused, taking a shaky breath, “If I die, Wilbur’s dead forever.”**

Phil nearly choked on air at that, eyes flitting up to the screen as he looked intently.

**Those words were all it took for Tommy’s walls to go crumbling. Those words were all it took to make him falter.**

**Memories of rainy days in the cottage, of playing in the river, of singing together, of *dandelions* came flooding back, and Tommy stumbled, barely catching himself as his eyes went wide.**

**“*Wilbur...*” He whispered, voice hollow.**

Ranboo’s heart broke at the way it was said, and while Tommy might’ve been remembering butterflies and flowers, Ranboo was remembering locked closets and the jagged stone walls of Pogtopia.

**“You *have* to let me go, okay?” Dream tried to reason, “But I’ll be good! I’ll stay out of your hair I won’t- I won’t try anything.”**

**“But you’ll come back...” Tommy shook his head, tears pricking at his eyes, “You-” He cut himself off, swallowing thickly, “Can you *really* bring people back? Can you bring him back?”**

Fundy felt his heart twist in his chest. For a moment he couldn’t understand why Tommy would even entertain such an idea.

Wilbur had *hurt* Tommy.

But then he thought of himself and Wilbur. He thought of how despite the fact that his father had hurt him, though maybe not in the same ways that he’d hurt Tommy, Fundy still would do *anything* to hear him speak again.

Ghostbur wasn’t enough. He wanted *Wilbur Soot* to tell him he was proud, no matter the cost.

He frowned, staring ahead at where he knew Tommy was leaning against Ranboo, and realized he understood why Tommy had wanted him back so badly.

**“I could.” Dream smiled softly, and he almost forgot where he was, reaching out to put a hand on Tommy’s shoulder like he had all those times in exile before stopping himself.**

**“I can bring him back, Tommy.”**

The screen faded to black, and they sat in a momentary silence.

And then Puffy’s sniffles turned into cries, and it caught them all off guard as she hunched in on herself, sobbing quietly.

Tubbo looked at her, frowning.

“Puffy?” He began, “What’s wrong?”

She didn’t acknowledge him for a moment, crying to herself, but when she finally did look up it was with sad and watery eyes.

“This was supposed to be it.” She muttered, “This was supposed to be the end.”

Tubbo turned his head to the side, glancing at his husband, confused.

“...What?”

“Putting Dream in prison,” She stressed, voice straining, “that should have been it... but I mean *look at him!* He’s only gotten worse!” she choked on a sob, “He *died!*”

The people in the room froze, and suddenly the joy they’d been feeling at seeing Tommy win was all but gone.

Puffy was *right*. That was supposed to be Tommy’s moment, his big win, but sitting in that room with his sleeping self, after watching him *break down*, it just felt like a slap to the face.

It felt as if things would never get better.

Ranboo looked down at Tommy, and for the first time since seeing him revived, realized that he had truly *died*. His heart lurched in his chest, tears pricking at his eyes, and he wrapped his free hand around the boy, holding him tight.

Tubbo was completely still, watching the older woman cry with a frown on his face. Sam didn’t dare react, shoulders tense in the back of the room.

And Puffy continued to sob, even as the screen flickered back to life.

# Sam's Interlude

## Chapter Summary

AWESAMDAD TIME!!! <3

Tommy had only ever shared about his life before the server once; to Sam and Sam alone.

It had been a rather hot day, the sun beating down on them, wind all but gone, and the air was thick and sticky. They'd been working on the hotel; just Sam, Tommy and Sam Nook. Collecting more flowers for the dye had been Tommy's job, but Sam had found himself trailing along anyway.

They'd gone out to the fields just out past the crater of L'Manberg, and gone searching for dandelions and red poppies. The grass had always been the greenest out there, right next to the redwood forests, and Sam found that it was one place he would always want to keep untouched.

*"Did you know dandelions are a weed?"* Tommy had asked him, back turned as he stared at the plains, hunched over slightly and staring at the abundance of tiny yellow weeds sprouting from beneath the ground.

*"Oh yeah?"* He hummed, nodding along. *The gentle wind rustled the grass at their feet.*

*"We had a lot back home..."* The blond muttered, still watching quietly, *"daisies too."*

*Sam perked up slightly at the mention of Tommy's home, a home before Sam had ever known him, intrigued.*

*“Phil said I wasn’t allowed to pick the daisies.” Tommy huffed out a laugh, “said they were too pretty for that.” He paused, staring at the dirt, “I sure picked the fuck out of those dandelions, though.”*

*The older man nodded quietly, paying apt attention. He always seemed to forget that Phil was Tommy’s father, it just... slipped his mind.*

*“Did you ever wish on them?” He asked, tilting his head.*

*Tommy stiffened slightly at that, so barely that it was practically invisible to the eye. His gaze flicked over to the yellow weeds, still in their prime, a bright and brilliant canary, and he pursed his lips.*

*He had. He’d wished for a father.*

*“No.” He shook his head, rolling his eyes with a scoff. “But it doesn’t really matter... right?”*

*Sam furrowed a brow, kneeling down beside Tommy and giving him an odd look.*

*“Why not?” He questioned.*

*The blond snorted, smirking slightly. He grabbed at one of the dandelions, plucking it from the ground unceremoniously and squishing it in the palm of his hand.*

*“Because they’re weeds, Sam,” He said, letting the crumpled dandelion fall to the grass in a pathetic heap, “weeds don’t grant wishes.”*

*A gentle smile and round glasses flashed in his mind; a pressed weed in the breast pocket of a trench coat soaked with blood.*

*“True,” Sam relented, nodding and shrugging his shoulders, “but they also symbolize hope and prosperity. Despite what people call them, they don’t let that take away their happy little glow.” He smiled, reaching out and gently running his finger across the yellow furls of the dandelion.*

*Tommy scowled, narrowing his eyes. “It’s not about what people call them,” he huffed, “it’s about what they are.” He spat, “They can be as pretty as they want but they’re still weeds. And they won’t ever be flowers.”*

*The creeper paused, silent for a moment and watching quietly. He pursed his lips, eyes soft.*

*“Well I think they’re nice,” He said finally, delicately plucking one from the grass and pinching it between his fingers, “I don’t care if they’re weeds... personally I don’t think they are.”*

*Tommy stared at him, unimpressed.*

*“You don’t?” He raised a brow, arms crossed.*

*“I don’t,” Sam shook his head, smiling, “I think they’re considered a weed, but I don’t think that’s what they are.” He paused, gaze flicking over to Tommy momentarily. The boy’s full attention was on him, watching carefully. He grinned. “They’re sweet and soft, and the bees just love them. People don’t like them because they’re perennial.” He muttered, “They’ll come back year after year, and they grow wherever they want.”*

*He looked over at Tommy, eyes fond, and gently placed the dandelion behind the blond’s ear. The latter scowled, looking down at the ground as if embarrassed, but made no move to remove it.*

*“I think,” Sam began, “that dandelions are my favourite flower.”*

Afterwards, they'd returned to the hotel with bushels of poppies and dandelions, and Tommy had carefully placed a dandelion behind Sam Nook's ear.

Sam looked over in Tommy's direction, heart swelling in his chest.

All he'd ever wanted was to protect the boy. Everything he did was for Tommy, and yet here he sat, watching some sick display of every single time he'd *failed*; of every time he hadn't been there.

And he just couldn't fathom it. He couldn't understand how Dream and Wilbur had seen a boy so kind and *good* and had ruined that.

Sam thought of Dream, of the man who had looked Tommy in his eyes and hurt him, and felt sick to his stomach. Wilbur had at least still had the heart to look away, to block it out and pretend it was all a bad dream.

He thought of the way Tommy had looked at him, of how he'd said the words *you let me die* with tears in his eyes, and swallowed back bile.

There was nothing he could do to go back, no way he could take back what he'd done, and Tommy had *died*.

"He's a heavy sleeper, hm?" Puffy said, dragging Sam from his thoughts. She was looking over at Tommy, smiling softly as the boy continued to sleep despite everything going on around him.

Tubbo laughed, eyes brightening as he leaned over excitedly.

"You don't know the half of it," he grinned, "you'd have a better chance waking a *rock*. Once he's out he's out for good. "



“He sleeps harder than the dead,” Fundy snickered, “there was this one time that Niki-”

“I don’t think we need to tell that story!” Niki interjected, eyes wide and face red from embarrassment. Fundy, Tubbo and Jack laughed to themselves while the others looked confused.

As the room dissolved into amicable chatter, Sam pursed his lips, looking away. With the Dream on the screen being put in prison, that only left so much time until the inevitable, and he felt himself growing sick at the thought of it.

He knew firsthand how gruesome it’d been, and he thought back to the reactions during Pogtopia and Exile, frowning. He wasn’t sure if the others would be able to stomach what was coming.

Nevertheless, the screen continued.

Drista couldn’t have cared less about them, and maybe Sam found that a trait in her he admired; perhaps the only way to truly get through to these people was to show them the gore and the grit firsthand, with no regard for the audience’s wellbeing.

**Tommy trekked through the snow, dressed in only a light sweater and still wearing his sneakers. The shoes were worn and ripped, with a hole in the left one that he could stick his toe out of.**

“He could’ve at least given the boots back if he decided he didn’t want to use them anymore.” Technoblade commented, unimpressed.

Tubbo, however, perked up at the screen, eyes flashing with recognition.

**The sky was bright, barely a cloud in sight, and the sun’s reflection bouncing off of the snow nearly blinded him. Behind him there were large spruces, plentiful and clumped together in heavy bunches.**

**The blond looked up, unimpressed at the log cabin in front of him. His hands were stuffed grumpily into his pockets, and he muttered something to himself.**

“That’s Snowchester!” Tubbo chirped happily.

“I still don’t understand why you *chose* to build out in the snow.” Sapnap raised a brow, looking slightly perturbed.

“Some of us happen to *like* the snow, Sapnap.” The former president retorted.

Ranboo looked away sheepishly, trying to avoid his husband’s gaze. It wasn’t that he didn’t *like* the snow, but more so that between his home in the arctic and Snowchester it was... a *lot* of snow.

**Bitterly, he turned on his heel, meandering down towards the icy shore. He stared down at the water, face blank. Beneath the waves, he watched the schools of sculpins and cod as they swam, completely content with their little selves.**

Quackity narrowed his eyes at the sight, images of Tommy thrashing in pitch black oceans in the dead of night surfacing in his mind. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t forget the sounds of the blond gasping for air and coughing harshly, of him choking on salt-water and heaving through ruined lungs on the sand.

**Tommy sighed, turning around and swiping off some of the snow from a lone log before seating himself upon it.**

**Curiously a brown cellar spider poked its head out from his pocket, crawling up his sweater sleeve and perching itself on his shoulder. He gave it an amused look.**

Jack cringed, looking away.

“What?” Niki smiled coyly, elbowing him in the ribs, “You’re not used to spiders by now?”

“I don’t care how many bugs that kid pulls out of nowhere,” Jack began, hunched in on himself, “those little creeps will never not make me gag.”

**“You’re going to freeze, you idiot.” He smirked, “Spiders aren’t meant for the cold, didn’t you know?”**

**The arachnid seemed to take offense at that, scuttling away into his hood. He barked out a loud laugh.**

“I don’t know how he does it.” Puffy muttered, shaking her head.

“He’s always been like that.” Came a hoarse voice from behind, and many of them turned, wide-eyed. Phil was staring up at them, a slight smile tugging at his lips. “Since the very beginning.”

“We used to find ants in the pantry,” Technoblade added, sounding almost as though he was reminiscing, “Tommy would always let them in... Said they told him they were hungry.”

A few of them laughed at that, Fundy especially.

“The little shit would be talking to the crickets at bloody four in the morning,” Phil chuckled lightly, “always with the chirping.”

And despite the fact that the others around him seemed to find it endearing, Sam found that for some reason he could feel nothing but disdain. For some reason, he felt his heart sink as they told their stories.

Why did *they* get to have all these sweet moments to share about Tommy when he was young? Why did *they* get to speak about him as if they'd actually been there for him as a child?

Sam's chest ached at the thought of Tommy at such an age, and for some reason, he wished so badly that it could have been him with the cute little stories and baby pictures.

**“Don’t worry,” he hummed, “we won’t stay for long...” He trailed off, staring out at the horizon. The water, despite its icy nature, seemed to call to him. He stayed rooted in his place. “I just wanted to check out Snowchester for a little bit. Tubbo lives here now.”**

Tubbo smiled at his own name.

**The spider poked at his hood excitedly, making him groan.**

**“I’m not calling him,” He rolled his eyes, “he has things to do. And so do I, you little bastard. I don’t know what it is with the lot of you but you’re always demanding I call someone. What if I wanted to be on my own? Ever considered that? Hm?”**

Many of them could relate to that, and Technoblade snorted, amused.

Ranboo thought of his particles above him, of how they constantly whispered and jeered for him to do the same, and smirked slightly, knowing they were listening and watching with him.

**His eight-legged friend went quiet, back to its regular chittering of incoherent things. He sighed.**

**Tommy was quiet for a moment, turning his head to look at the collection of cabins up on the hill. He pursed his lips, frowning as though he was uneasy.**

**“A new nation...” He muttered, cracking his knuckles absentmindedly at his side, “Think I’ve seen this one before... yeah?” He smirked slightly.**

“It’s not a nation,” Tubbo frowned, furrowing a brow, “it’s a *commune*. A militaristic colony more than anything!”

“What a great place to raise our two-year-old son.” Ranboo nodded quietly along.

“*Don’t* you even start right now.” The ram narrowed his eyes, pointing a finger in his husband’s face. The taller barked out a loud laugh.

At his side, Tommy shuffled slightly, curling in closer to his shoulder and murmuring something incoherent in his sleep.

Ranboo softened slightly at that, moving to card a hand through the younger’s hair.

**The blond paused, biting the inside of his cheek, looking to be thinking very hard.**

**“People are going to keep doing this, you know?” He asked, though the cellar spider didn’t answer, “Now that Dream’s locked up they can make as many nations as they want. They can expand and keep creating.”**

“To be fair there’s only like... *three* new countries...” Karl mumbled quietly. “Three’s a small number.”

“For sweets maybe, not entire nations.” Sam snorted.

**Tommy let out a huff, standing and brushing the snow off of himself. Gently, he reached into his hood, pulling his friend out and holding it up before his face. It didn’t look very pleased with him.**

“Ugly fucker.” Jack hissed.

Tubbo glared at him, though it lacked any real venom.

“Tommy or the spider?” Fundy questioned, tilting his head.

Phil sighed, putting his head in his hands. “Fundy, can you please be normal for *five minutes?*” He pleaded, eyes tired.

His grandson only snickered to himself.

**“I think I’ve done this already,” He admitted, sounding almost tired, “I’ve been here, I’ve done it.” he laughed quietly, “the thrill would just be gone for me... yeah? I have to dedicate my time to something else. Instead of- Instead of making some new country, because Prime knows there’ll be a lot more of those to come.”**

Niki blinked, as if taken aback, albeit only slightly.

That was a much more mature reaction from Tommy than she’d expected. In her mind, she still saw him as the boy who jumped into everything headfirst, who never grew tired of causing problems.

**The teen pocketed the cellar spider, letting it crawl back into the warmth of his sweater, and pulled his hood up. He looked over at the treeline before opening his communicator. He tapped on the contact labeled *Sam* and typed a simple phrase.**

***Where are you right now***

**The screen went dark.**

“*Ohhhhh*,” Tubbo nodded, as though he’d finally realized something, “it’s the hotel time!”

Sam sat quietly, not saying a word.

“Is that really... necessary?” Niki pondered aloud, brow furrowed. “I just mean that- it’s like- the hotel was a failure to begin with, and it’s *Jack’s* now. Compared to everything else we’ve seen this just doesn’t feel as important.

Puffy looked back, a disappointed frown on her face, but didn’t speak.

“I’ll worry about what’s necessary and what isn’t.” Drista replied, voice curt and snappy, “And I think *you* of all people have other things to worry about than the hotel.”

Niki blanched, looking confused.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” She questioned, looking up at the ceiling. Drista refused to answer.

Once again, Puffy looked back at the pink-haired woman. Her brows were drawn into a concerned expression, but she quickly went back to staring at the screen.

Niki shuffled uncomfortably in her seat, pursing her lips.

**Tommy stood awkwardly on the Prime Path in the low light of the evening. He held his communicator tightly in his left hand, eyes scanning over the horizon.**

**Just feet away from him were the remains of Dream’s home. Broken brick walls that were turning ever so slowly to dust, and overturned chests that had been hastily emptied.**

Tubbo bit the inside of his mouth at the sight of the ruins, unsure of how to feel. He and Tommy had been so young and careless when they'd first gone sneaking into it. He could remember telling the blond to put back the diamonds he'd took, but looking back now, he wished they'd taken more.

**“Tommy!” A voice from behind him called, and he perked up, whirling around.**

**Sam stood on the lower ledge of the path, looking up with a friendly smile. He waved gently, beginning to walk closer.**

The man watching himself on screen blinked, unsure of how to feel at the sight of his past self.

“Have my shoulders always been that broad?” He asked.

Ranboo snickered quietly to himself.

“You’re buff as hell, dude.” Sapnap commented, “Didn’t you know?”

**“Sammy boy!” Tommy chirped, waving back enthusiastically, “Big man Sam!”**

**The older man approached, stopping in front of him with an amused huff. He raised a brow, crossing his arms.**

**“That’s a new one,” he hummed, “I like it, it rhymes.”**

Puffy smiled at the screen. It wasn’t often that people, *especially* the older people, on the server played into Tommy’s antics, but Sam had always had a good heart.



More than anything she knew that he'd always had a soft spot for the boy.

**Tommy beamed at him, instantly dissolving into an incoherent jumble of random add-on sentences and complete nonsense—things about prisons and bugs and real estate and the economy and every other word in the book.**

**Sam watched, befuddled, as the blond talked his ear off, boasting about his 'Big Plan' which he had yet to state. About maybe a third of the conversation was actually getting through to him, but in completely abstract words that didn't make an ounce of sense.**

"He's worse than you." George stated plainly, looking at Karl. The latter tried his best to look offended, but couldn't help the grin that spread across his face.

**"Tommy," He began, stifling a laugh, "what did you call me all the way out here for?"**

**The blond paused in his rambling, turning to look at the creeper. He grinned.**

**"I'm glad you asked!" He clapped his hands together, outstretching an arm towards the remnants of Dream's home with a dramatic flare, "I'd like to hire you."**

**Sam paused, looking at the crumbling foundation and then back at the teen.**

**"...You'd like to hire me." He repeated.**

**Tommy nodded enthusiastically.**

**"What for?" The older man asked, looking at the pathetic ruins before him and cocking a brow.**

“Weren’t you already working on a project at that point?” Quackity asked, head tilting curiously.

“I was,” Sam nodded, “The bank.”

“You mean the bank you still haven’t finished?” Puffy smirked, looking back at him.

“...Maybe.” The Warden muttered, looking off to the side.

Quackity laughed loudly.

**The blond paused, losing a bit of his confidence. He sighed, turning his head to look back at the massive prison looming behind them and then back to the older man.**

**“Sam, I’m going to be honest with you,” he began, “I need a new start.”**

Ranboo smiled sadly at that, looking down at Tommy.

“Kind of weird for him to be doing something on his own like this.” Technoblade noted.

“What?” Tubbo offered him a quizzical glance.

“Tommy likes to play the leader, but he’s usually stuck following.” The piglin explained, “Even when we were little, he just followed me and Wilbur around. And the same thing with L’Manberg. He just... follows.”

Jack pursed his lips, frowning.

**The man in question blinked, as if he hadn't been expecting the serious shift. He nodded quietly, motioning to continue.**

**“Things are starting back up again... y’know?” Tommy asked, “People are getting back out there now that they’re not living under fear anymore, but the thing is that the Community House is gone. There’s no more staple on the server. There’s not a place that brings everyone together anymore.”**

Sapnap stared at the screen, watching with a sinking feeling in his chest. He’d placed so much blame on Tommy for the supposed destruction of the Community House.

That build had been the foundation of the server. It had been everything, and seeing it blown to pieces had made him shaky in the knees.

But the day after, when he’d been standing in the ruins, staring at everything he’d lost, it wasn’t Dream that came to him. It wasn’t Dream that appeared with the intent to mend and move forward, to apologize and reminisce.

It was Tommy.

Despite everything, it had always been him and Tommy.

**“There’s the church.” Sam offered optimistically.**

**The blond smirked sadly.**

**“Believe it or not, and I had a *very* hard time believing this, but not everyone likes the church as much as I do.” He laughed.**

“Because it’s bull.” Tubbo deadpanned.

Puffy turned to look at him, confused.

“You don’t like the church?” She asked.

The former president scoffed, rolling his eyes.

“Tommy’s so convinced Prime is this all-knowing God... y’know?” He began, “But it’s not like She was ever there for him when he needed it. He devotes all this time to praying and worshipping and it gets him *nowhere*! If anything he’s worse off than the rest of us!”

Quackity frowned, looking slightly upset.

“Sometimes faith is what keeps a person going, Tubbo.” The duck said quietly, “Tommy’s strength is within him, but She brings it out. She doesn’t let it go to waste.”

“I’m not arguing whether or not she’s real, Big Q,” Tubbo replied, “I’m sitting in a room that some other God tossed me into. I *know* gods are real. I just think they’re cruel, and I think they take advantage of humanity’s hive mindset.” He snorted.

“Tubbo-”

“If Prime cared about Tommy even a *sliver* as much as he cared about her, then he wouldn’t have died!” The ram snapped, a hint of animosity coming out with his words.

Quackity faltered as the room went silent. The others in the rows stared at each other in the tense quiet, unsure of what to do.

Tommy was completely oblivious to the world around him, his chest rising and falling slowly as he continued to sleep.

“... I don’t think that’s true.” A disembodied voice said finally, breaking the terse silence.

Tubbo looked up at the ceiling, perplexed. “What?”

“I said I don’t think that’s true.” Drista repeated, and she sounded almost... *angry*. “You don’t understand Gods, and I think it’s in your best interest not to speak like you do.”

Tubbo narrowed his eyes, clenching his fists.

“But you’re *Gods!*” He cried, exasperated, “You could have *saved him!*” His voice wavered at the last two words, and Ranboo swore he saw tears building in his husband’s eyes.

“You can do *anything* and you choose to sit there and let this happen to the people who dedicate their lives to you.” Tubbo muttered quietly.

Drista was silent for a moment, as if contemplating his words.

“Just forget it,” She sighed, “you wouldn’t understand it, but Gods have rules too.”

Tubbo frowned, furrowing his brow, but the silence stretched out.

**For a moment the two were quiet, and Sam watched as Tommy stared holes into the ground where Dream used to stay.**

**“I want to build a hotel, Sam.” The teen said finally, looking back over to the creeper. “Or... I suppose I want to hire you to build it for me.”**

The creeper felt a pang in his chest at the words. Memories of staying up late tracing blueprints, of building a little robot with a hardhat and a friendly smile, of laying the foundations for the hotel, of Tommy smiling up at him, all came flooding back.

He felt bile rising in his throat.

**“You want me to build you a hotel?” Sam repeated, seemingly perplexed.**

**Tommy took a deep breath, re-affixing his smile and opening his arms wide.**

**“Yup!” He agreed, grinning wide, “That’s exactly what I want!”**

Puffy’s features softened as she watched the screen, a small smile growing on her face.

*I missed seeing him smile, she thought quietly to herself.*

**Sam paused, staring at the lot of land it seemed as though Tommy had already picked out. It wasn’t much. Uneven land and coarse dirt with the remnants of someone else’s house already built upon it. He turned to the blond.**

**“Why?” He asked simply.**

**Tommy groaned, running a hand across his face. “I already told you!” He cried, “There’s going to be conflict soon I *know* it, okay? And wars are going to start up again *and* the Community House is gone! I want people to have a place to stay in between all that.”**

**“...That’s not what I was expecting from him.” Karl said, perplexed.**

“I’m gonna be honest, I heard the words ‘Tommy’ and ‘hotel’ together and immediately said it was a scam.” Technoblade commented, arms crossed.

“I did too...” Puffy admitted sheepishly. She’d always found Tommy’s scams and schemes endearing more than anything, often harmless, but that didn’t mean she didn’t expect them of him.

“He did say he wanted to change,” Ranboo began quietly, “I think he was serious about it.”

The others were quiet.

**Sam’s features softened at the words, and he smiled just barely. He sighed, shaking his head.**

Phil cocked his head to the side at that, slightly confused. It seemed that the warden had a soft spot for his youngest.

**“Alright,” He began, looking back up with crossed arms, “If you’re one hundred percent serious about this, let’s discuss payment.”**

**Instantly, Tommy’s serious facade crumbled, and he all but jumped in the air.**

**“Yes!” He cried excitedly, bouncing with joy, “I knew you’d say yes I knew it!”**

Puffy giggled, smiling wide at the screen as she watched the teen celebrate.

Jack scoffed, rolling his eyes, but a smirk tugged at his lips; just barely.

**Sam watched with a raised brow as the boy once again dissolved into completely incomprehensible chatter, and felt the last remaining energy he had being sapped from his body.**

**This was going to be one of his most difficult projects.**

**The screen faded to black.**

“I can’t believe I thought the hotel was just some get-rich-quick scheme...” Puffy muttered, looking sad, “All this time he wanted to give everyone a place to be together.”

“Oh don’t get me wrong,” Sam began, leaning over in his seat, “a big part of it *was* about the money. I mean, let’s be real here. It’s *Tommy*.” He snorted, and a couple of people laughed with him. “But he *did* also want to build a staple for the community. He wanted somewhere where everyone felt safe. A new home away from home.”

Jack thought back to his hotel; the black and red build with incomplete and unfurnished rooms, the sign out front that read *Manifold Hotel* in big bold letters, the array of emptied bottles of liquor strewn about haphazardly. He didn’t feel *guilty* for seizing control of a dead boy’s dream, but he didn’t exactly feel magnificent about it either.

The scene on the screen switched, signaling the beginning of a new memory, and they all brought their gazes up to watch.

**It was a sunny day on the server. The clouds were sparse, barely any in sight, and the wind was gentle; a subtle breeze. The grass was green, blooming with little white flowers and buds.**

**Amidst it all, Tommy stood completely alone, feet rooted in place, at the very top of the server’s largest tower, trident in hand.**



Tubbo froze, and the rest of the room followed suit. He looked over in a panic at his sleeping friend, distressed, but Ranboo quickly grabbed ahold of his hand.

“It’s okay.” The enderman assured him, “he’s right here.”

**His shoes were planted firmly on the ledge, toes just barely jutting off. The breeze tickled at the hairs on the back of his neck, and he looked down at the world beneath him with a smile on his face.**

Sam stared quizzically at the screen, almost nervously as well. He wasn’t sure where this was going.

**He paused for a moment, taking a deep breath in, before swinging his trident back.**

**And then? Tommy *flew*.**

**With one pull from the trident, he was launched into the skies, soaring amongst the birds. His hair blew around wildly in the wind, and he let a wild laugh escape him, tears pricking at his eyes.**

All at once, the tense fear in the room was replaced with overwhelming relief.

Quackity sank back into his chair, letting out a loud sigh and placing a hand over his chest.

“Damn kid is going to give me a heart attack...” He muttered, shaking his head. Karl grinned.

**It was as if he was completely weightless, not tied down to a single thing. It was as if he’d been released from his shackles.**

They watched as he flew, feeling a sort of lightness in themselves as well. They'd spent so long watching Tommy being beaten down that it felt liberating for *them* even just to be watching him fly so freely.

**Quickly, however, he lost momentum, and began to fall.**

Puffy tried not to let her anxiousness get the best of her. She saw the river beneath him. She knew he'd be fine.

Still, the nagging worry persisted.

**Tommy looked down at the water below him, grinning, and with all his might, let out a scream. It was loud and piercing, and his voice cracked quite a few times and quite badly at that, but he cried out with his entire chest. He screamed until his lungs were empty and even beyond, stretching his arms out wide and letting himself plummet.**

A few of them cringed at the noise, but Quackity all out *beamed*, letting out a quiet breathless laugh of his own.

Tommy sounded so *real* in that moment, allowing himself to scream and just- *yell*. It was comparable to nails on a chalkboard, sure, but to Quackity it was the most amazing thing he'd ever heard.

**He landed in the river with a loud splash, rocketing into deep and murky waters. Opening his eyes, he was met with the sight of the fish fleeing him in terror, and he laughed loudly, despite being underwater.**

George grinned at the sight, letting out a tiny chuckle.

**Paddling upwards, he breached the surface, giggling as he took deep breaths. He didn't hesitate, however, to throw his arm back once more, going flying into the air once again.**

**Tommy soared in the sky, laughing at the sun on his skin. Tears pricked at his eyes once again, but that time it wasn't from the wind on his face.**

For some reason, despite everything they'd watched, it was the sight of Tommy finally being happy that brought them to tears.

They'd watched him die and they'd watched him struggle to stay alive, but they'd never watched him *live*.

The sight of him so high in the air, so *light*, well, it was somehow the most tear-provoking moment yet.

Puffy smiled at the screen, tears streaming down her face as she laughed with him.

***"We're free!"* He cried, eyes welling up further with tears as he smiled, "We're actually free!"**

Tubbo grinned ear to ear, letting out a breathless huff and watching completely engrossed.

Ranboo continued to run his clawed hand through Tommy's hair, smiling softly with gentle eyes.

**Trident in hand, he let himself fall once more. Grinning to himself and screaming again as he plummeted into the water.**

**When he resurfaced, he let himself laugh, floating on his back and staring up at the sky. He laid there for what could have been hours, merely looking up.**

***“I’m finally free.”*** He whispered to himself, smiling with eyes that seemed to look almost... *blue*.

**The screen went dark.**

A silence completely unique to every other washed over the room. The audience was completely quiet, as if almost stunned by the display.

“Imagine what a pain he’d be with actual wings.” Fundy hummed, laughing quietly to himself. A few others laughed alongside him, and Phil seemed to grow almost sad at the words, quickly steeling himself over as if it’d never happened.

As they sat in amicable chatter, a complete warmth having spread across them, Ranboo couldn’t help but look down at the blond.

Immediately, however, he froze. His heart sunk, eyes widening, and breath catching in his throat.

The words *I’m finally free* rang in his mind as his gaze scanned across the sunken cheeks and the barely healed scar across the bridge of Tommy’s nose, as he stared at the bags beneath Tommy’s eyes and the split lip. All things that hadn’t been there in the memory they’d just watched.

Ranboo swallowed back bile, staring down at the younger, and held on a little tighter.

# old friends

## Chapter Summary

the egg + some nukes

trigger warning for blood and content warning for bugs (an abundance of them)

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Puffy was not a therapist.

Not a licensed one at least; or even one with training.

It seemed to be a common misconception on the server. People would flock to her thinking one good talk with her could solve their problems.

Of course, she wasn't not a therapist either... she just wasn't a qualified professional.

She offered help to people who needed it, always extending the olive branch to anyone she thought might benefit from it. She curated TheraPuffy; a way for her to organize the seemingly unending flow of traumatized and hurting members of the server.

She wanted to give people a support system, a person they could go to regardless of factions and war, but that didn't mean she really knew what she was doing.

Of course, she knew what not to do, and she'd been spending countless nights up reading till the crack of dawn, but none of that substituted for the real deal; nothing she did could replace or have the same effect as someone properly trained.

That being said, Puffy was pretty sure everything Tommy had going on was beyond even a qualified professional. She'd known he'd been through the unimaginable, but what she'd seen in the dark decrypt old room with stiff and scratchy carpets went beyond anything that anyone could ever imagine.

Being completely honest, Puffy didn't have a clue what she was doing. She didn't even know where to begin. How could she even fathom the mere idea of helping someone so far gone?

Tommy had been the original inspiration of TheraPuffy, believe it or not. She'd seen him, completely alone and miserable, and thought maybe she could help; maybe she could offer him a shoulder to lean on.

What Puffy had initially assumed would be easy enough to tackle, a grassy hill, if you would, had become a snow mountain that could rival Everest.

She felt so unbelievably out of her depths, somewhat parallel to the visual she'd seen of Tommy thrashing in the deep and murky waters of the frozen beach.

Puffy craned her neck to look behind her, glancing up and to the side at the sleeping figure of a boy she'd wanted so badly to protect.

He was so pale and small, cheeks sunken in and dark circles beneath his eyes. Ranboo's sweater practically swallowed him whole, and she wanted to cry because he'd always been so big . This should never have happened.

And worst of all, she wasn't sure if she, or anyone for that matter, would be able to fix what had been done to him.

She shifted her gaze to Ranboo, who had an arm curled protectively around the blond. His mouth was pulled into a deep frown, and not the usual anxious one she knew him for but one that was barely masking his anger and worry.

Tubbo sat beside him, leaning tiredly on his husband with a greying look in his eyes. It wasn't physical or literal of course, not like the ever progressing phenomenon of his blue eyes losing their colour, but still, Tubbo's eyes held that same exhaustion.

Puffy swallowed thickly, moving to look ahead once again.

She was completely lost.

**The screen opened into a familiar setting. Grassy hills and a worn down wooden path leading through the area. The sun was high in the sky, shining down on the world, and the clouds were sparse.**

**Tommy hummed happily to himself, hair somewhat combed and clothes free of rips and tatters. He had a nonchalant look on his face as he walked down the path, a construction helmet in hand.**

It had been a long time since any of them had seen him so happy.

Well, perhaps happy wasn't the perfect word, but it encompassed what they were thinking.

He didn't look sad, and that was what mattered. Somehow the hotel had managed to lift his spirits and help him bounce back in a way they'd never thought he could.

Jack shifted uncomfortably.

**He passed the hotel, however, heading further down the path.**

**As he neared the gates of the mansion he paused, peering past the barriers. Antfrost stood before the front doors, head tilted to the side as he watched the blond; eyes wide and irises red.**

“Ugh,” Fundy scoffed, turning his head disdainfully, “I’ve spent so much time in here I almost forgot about that stupid fucking egg.” He spat.

“Me too, honestly.” Karl admitted, looking rather disappointed.

“Still don’t know what we’re going to do about that...” Sapnap muttered.

**Tommy shuddered, shivers going down his back as he muttered something about how much he hated cats. Still, he moved to open the gate, stepping inside property lines and strutting up to the older man.**

**“Antfrost!” He greeted, grinning wide, “Heyyyyy...” He trailed off awkwardly, rubbing the back of his neck sheepishly. Taking another look at the feline, he furrowed his brow. “Are you high!?” He cried, completely askance.**

A couple of them laughed.

Niki scoffed, rolling her eyes.

**“No, Tommy,” the other sighed, rubbing his temple, “I’m fine.” His tail flicked back and forth as though he was agitated.**

**Tommy narrowed his eyes, quirking his lips and shaking his head. “Fine,” he relented, “whatever. I’m not here for you. Where’s Bad?” He demanded, looking up at the windows in the mansion, trying to see inside.**

Sam remembered when he’d once stayed in the home. It had been so lively, so colorful. Mostly full of shrill shrieks from either Skeppy or Bad, but full of life nonetheless.



**It looked completely dead within the walls. Not a single light on, the glass dirty; as though it hadn't been lived in for months.**

**"What's he look like?" A voice chirped from behind him.**

**Tommy shrieked, jumping in the air and turning on his heel not a second later. He stared at the demon smiling at him, scowling. Badboyhalo was grinning cheerily, looming just inches away from the blond.**

Tubbo laughed loudly at that, knowing if Tommy was awake the younger would have his head. Ranboo let out an amused huff.

**"Jesus!" The youngest cried, placing a hand on his chest as Antfrost snickered behind him, "What the fuck is your deal, man!?"**

They watched as the two bickered, Antfrost standing awkwardly to the side.

Quackity grinned; Tommy seemed to be doing anything and everything in his power to antagonize Bad.

Some things never changed.

**"Look," Tommy began, motioning with his hands, "my employee- I'm his boss, not the other way around-,asked me to investigate this uh- this Egg thing, yeah? Said it might hinder the construction of my hotel or something." He explained, oblivious to the glances the other two were sharing with one another. "Do you know anything about it?"**

**"You told him to go investigate The Egg!?" Puffy cried shrilly, eyes wide. She turned to look back.**

Sam grimaced, smiling tersely.

“Technically Sam Nook told him-”

“Sam...” The woman warned dangerously.

The creeper sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose.

“I didn’t know how dangerous the Egg actually was at that point,” he explained, “and I thought even if it was, Bad and Ant still wouldn’t hurt Tommy... y’know?”

Puffy’s face softened at that, and she offered him a sad smile.

“Yeah...” She began quietly, “I know.”

**Bad stared at his feline companion for a moment. “...Yeah.” He replied finally, tone hesitant.**

**“Okay...” The blond raised a brow, “what do you know about it?”**

**The three began to walk down the Prime Path together, Tommy and Bad side by side and Antfrost flanked behind them, trident in hand as he scanned the perimeter.**

Something uneasy festered in Ranboo’s gut.

**“I know that it’s pretty great.” The demon hummed, still omitting any real substance.**

Techno rolled his eyes.

**Tommy paused for a moment, continuing in his steps as he contemplated something in his mind.**

**“Can you take me to it?” He asked.**

There was a drawn-out silence.

“You’re joking...” George muttered.

**Instantly, the older two perked up. Both their ears and tails alike sprung to life as they met each other’s gaze. Antfrost grinned and Bad couldn’t help but sprout a few inches in height in his excitement.**

**“Of course, we can take you to it!” The latter nodded, grinning as he regained his bearings, shrinking back down to Tommy’s height. He began to walk at a much faster pace, a sort of excited hop in his step, “Follow me.”**

“I’ve always considered keeping a small spray bottle on me, to be honest,” Jack admitted, “to keep Antfrost away.”

“Oh,” Karl said, “I thought you meant for Ranboo.” A few people nodded along with him.

“Why on earth would I bring up Ranboo right now?” Jack questioned, raising a brow.

“I dunno,” the time traveler shrugged, “people say stuff completely off-topic all the time.”

The bald man sighed, running a hand over his face.

“Apologies, Ranboo,” He addressed the younger, hands pressed together pointedly, “I was not talking about you.”

“None taken.” The enderman assured.

**They continued in silence for a few minutes, trekking forward under the harsh heat of the sun. Tommy shifted uncomfortably, grimacing slightly.**

**Slowly, a small soil centipede crawled out from one of Tommy’s pockets, chittering quietly to itself as it scaled his sweater. Gently, it curled around his ear, antennae flicking.**

**The blond paused, halting in his steps.**

“Alright,” Fundy began, shaking his head, “that’s it.”

People in the room all turned to stare at him, confused. His ears were pinned back anxiously, tail fluffed out.

“Someone needs to check his pockets for bugs!” He hissed, “Now!”

“What?”

“Ranboo,” Fundy gestured wildly, “quick! Check the hoodie pockets! ... Oh! And his hood!”

“Fundy,” Ranboo started, brows furrowed, “I’m not going to check his pockets while he’s sleeping.”

The fox groaned, throwing his head back.

“But what if he snuck bugs into the room!?” He cried, “What if they’re on me!?” He shuddered, peeling his jacket off and throwing it to the ground as he combed his clawed fingers through his hair.

“Don’t foxes like... eat bugs?” Techno asked, raising a brow.

Fundy scowled, turning with an angry glare.

“Oh shove it!” He hissed, “Or better yet go roll around in some mud you walking hog!”

Techno bristled, ready to reply with something equally as scathing.

“Boys,” Puffy interjected, tone firm and unwavering, “that’s enough.”

Fundy let out an unenthused huff, falling back dramatically into his seat with his arms crossed and eyes narrowed.

**“Bad?” He called wearily, “The- uh...” he bit his tongue, “I’m being told I should run.”**

“See? The bugs are friendly.” Karl supplied, “They’re helpful.”

Fundy grumbled something unintelligible to himself.

**The two now ahead of him stopped, looking back with narrowed eyes. For just a split second, the youngest felt fear, but the demon quickly scoffed, rolling his eyes.**

**He laughed, seemingly amused, “You don’t need to run from the Egg,” he shook his head, “you need to run *to* the egg!”**

**“Like anyone believes that.” Quackity scoffed.**

**Wordlessly, they began to walk again, not looking behind them to see if the blond was following. Tommy sighed, carefully unfurling the arthropod around his ear and setting it down in the grass with a gentle pat. He begrudgingly followed along.**

**Sapnap tilted his head curiously.**

**His brow furrowed as he trailed behind them. “I don’t run on the Prime Path...” He muttered bitterly.**

**The words however seemed to set off a light in his head as his eyes brightened somewhat, and he looked over at the pair.**

**“Is the Egg sanctioned by Prime?” He asked, tilting his head curiously.**

**Puffy sighed.**

**“Quite literally the opposite.” She muttered.**

**“Uhhh..” Badboyhalo trailed off momentarily, blanching before quickly regaining his composure, “Of course!” He chirped, hands clasped dutifully as he grinned.**

**Tommy hummed thoughtfully at that, nodding along. He seemed to be more open to the idea of it after that, stance relaxing.**

Sam narrowed his eyes at the screen, sitting up straighter stiffly.

**A June beetle, that time, round and green emerged from seemingly nowhere, scuttling towards his ear much like the centipede before it. He stopped for just a moment, listening closely as it whispered to him.**

“I’m never going anywhere near him again.”

Puffy scoffed, however the hint of a smile on her face betrayed any real annoyance she might’ve otherwise conveyed.

**“I need a hazmat suit from the church?” He repeated aloud, tilting his head curiously.**

**Antfrost’s tail flicked stiffly again, red eyes narrowing.**

**“No no no,” Bad dismissed, shaking his head, “don’t be silly. They’re being ridiculous.” His gaze honed in on the plump insect cradled in the crook of Tommy’s neck, grinning slightly. The latter frowned softly, shooing the beetle away.**

They watched as the two members of the Eggpire led Tommy through the server; past the rotting carcass of L’Manberg and further into the greater SMP.

**“This way,” Badboyhalo ushered him.**

**They made their way down a dimly lit corridor, the walls seemingly closing in. A soft red glow emanated from the end of the tunnel.**

“Is this really how to get to the Egg?” Jack asked, tilting his head.

Sam nodded silently, causing the younger to snort.

“They couldn’t have made it more sinister looking if they tried.”

**Carefully, Tommy stepped out into the underground clearing, eyes widening in horror. Red vines stretched out as far as the eye could see, decorating the space from top to bottom.**

**The blond doubled over, coughing harshly.**

Ranboo winced, hissing slightly as he watched.

Puffy stared intently, remembering how thick the air was down there. Despite Tommy sleeping soundly behind her, she couldn’t help but watch the screen and dread the worst.

**Neither man beside him spared a glance as he all but hacked up a lung.**

**“What the *fuck!*?” Tommy cried, staring in a mix of both awe and terror at the red completely surrounding him. “This is *huge!*”**

“So this is just... festering under the SMP?” Fundy questioned.

“I mean yeah basically.” Sam hummed.

**“Isn’t it beautiful?” Bad hummed, stroking a vine carefully, a small smile on his face.**

**Lava bubbled and popped in small crevices in the ground, heating up the cavern and adding to the dangerous glow.**



**“Where’s the core?” The blond asked, “like- where’s the center?”**

“Why in Prime’s name would he want to see the center?” Sapnap quirked a brow, unimpressed with the sheer stupidity of the kid sitting in front of him.

**Slowly, almost seemingly desperately, a ladybug flew shakily into his palms. It trembled and spasmed, wilting as it struggled to continue. He held it up to his ear, listening to the faint whisper.**

***Run.***

**The ladybug froze at that, falling to its side. Tommy realized with horror that it had died. He dropped it to the ground.**

“Oh...” Niki muttered, eyes wide.

“Well isn’t that charming!” Fundy quipped nervously.

**Dozens more insects flocked to him, landing on his shoulders and in his hair, all twitching and shaking. They buzzed with a unanimous warning; a chant thrumming through the air.**

***RUN.***

“Jesus Christ...” Phil mumbled quietly to himself.

“I’ve never seen that many on him at once.” Tubbo commented, “They must have been really concerned.”

**“Willing to die for the cause,” Technoblade added, “like cannon fodder.”**

**“This way, Tommy.” Antfrost urged, staring unimpressed at the plethora of many-legged creatures decorating the boy.**

**The blond nodded shakily, moving to follow. With each step, another bug dropped dead to the floor.**

**“Eugh.” Fundy and Niki alike looked away distastefully.**

**He approached the hulking mass of blood-red vines and decorum in the corner, pursing his lips. He took a hesitant step back, furrowing his brow.**

**“Everyone’s saying I’m not safe.” He told them quietly, unsure.**

**“Cause you’re not,” Tubbo hissed, “run you idiot!”**

**“That’s ridiculous,” Bad huffed, shaking his head amusedly, “everyone’s safe with the egg.”**

**A bout of silence passed through the room, and for a moment Tommy swore he heard a voice; a quiet murmur.**

**The magma fizzled by his feet, splattering messily on the ground.**

**Sam took a shaky breath, steadying himself. The chunk of missing flesh on his forearm thrummed under the warm light of the screen.**

**“This is so horrible.” Karl muttered, hiding his face in Sapnap’s shoulder.**

**“Why don’t you touch it?” Bad whispered, cocking his head slightly. His tone was gentle, as though he was speaking to a stray.**

**Tommy huffed quietly, taking a nervous step towards the Egg. It pulsed quietly, as though it were living, as though it were breathing.**

**“I don’t think Eggs are supposed to do that.” Ranboo said quietly.**

**George snorted.**

**“Go on.” Antfrost encouraged, smiling.**

**The blond frowned, looking back at them.**

**Wordlessly, he outstretched a hand, and despite himself, he could have sworn it reached back. Ever so slightly, his skin made contact with the flesh-like substance. Slowly, the Egg wriggled and writhed under his touch, pushing out so that it was nearly surrounding his palm.**

**“That is just foul.” Jack hissed, glaring at the screen.**

**“First thing I’m doing when I get out of here is hacking all this shit down.” Quackity said, looking slightly green.**

**Behind him, Antfrost and Badboyhalo watched with bated breath, practically on the edges of their seats.**

**“How do you feel, Tommy?” The demon asked, an excited lilt in his voice.**

**The boy in question tilted his head as though he were confused, pushing slightly harder on the Egg. He squeezed it slightly, pursing his lips with a furrowed brow.**

**“Am I doing this right?” He questioned, “Am I touching the right bit?”**

**“...What?”**

**“It didn’t do anything to him?”**

**The two older men looked at each other in alarm, and the feline’s tail spiked in agitation.**

**“You don’t... Feel anything?” Antfrost asked, frowning deeply.**

**“Oh my god,” Fundy began, “he’s immune.”**

**Tommy paused, feeling around for a few more seconds before letting out a startled gasp. He lurched violently, back arching as his eyes widened. A full-body shudder wracked his frame, chills snaking down his spine.**

**“Okay well fuck.” The fox threw his hands up in surrender. “Nevermind then.”**

**Technoblade let out an amused huff.**

**Bad and Ant shared an excited look.**

**“I...I feel it! I can hear the Egg!” A grin spread across Tommy’s face, his eyes lighting up with excitement.**

“I can’t look!” Karl shrieked, burying his face deeper in his fiancé’s shirt.

**“Yes, Tommy!” Badboyhalo cheered, baring his rows of pointed teeth as he smiled, “What’s it saying? What’s it telling you!?”**

Tubbo smirked knowingly at the screen.

**The blond hunched in on himself slightly, stopping as though he were listening. He nodded quietly, making small humming noises.**

**“It says...” He began, and both men leaned in expectantly, “It says that...” he paused again, drawing out the suspense, “it says that we should all start swearing!” Tommy threw his head back, laughing to himself.**

A flood of relief washed over the room, many of them relaxing back into their seats.

Karl let out a relieved sigh, sitting back and practically melting. George laughed at him.

**Behind him, however, the other two shared a glance, and it was not an amused one. A unanimous decision seemed to pass between the two without a word being spoken. Bad’s hand curled around the base of his trident, eyes narrowing as he slowly began to grow.**

**Tommy turned tail, paling as he saw the now fully grown demon looming over him. The king of the underworld stood almost ten feet tall, his pointed tail raking through the red floors.**

The relief seemed to be short-lived, however, as everyone once again grew incredibly tense at the sight on the screen.

Puffy had to swallow back bile at the sight of her friends acting so unlike themselves.

**Antfrost bared his claws quietly, ears pinning to the back of his head as he glared.**

**“Tommy...” Bad began slowly, “I don’t think the Egg likes you...” He trailed off, trident glistening in his hand.**

**The teen took a tentative step back, nearly pressing up against the Egg. He grinned nervously, putting his hands up as a sign of good faith.**

**“You know what?” He questioned, “I think you’re right,” he laughed anxiously, sweating profusely. He tried to back away further but was met with the flesh of the Egg. He grimaced, looking up at the two.**

Get out of there, Tubbo thought urgently, knee bouncing up and down anxiously.

“He can’t stay out of trouble for five minutes can he?” Technoblade asked, a hint of a smirk in his tone.

**For a moment no one moved, and they all watched one another waiting carefully; and then? Antfrost lunged.**

Niki jumped in her seat, startled by the loud and sudden noise.

**Tommy yelped, narrowly dodging his clawed assailant. He nearly tripped over himself, fumbling around in his inventory as he leapt over vines. Fishing an ender pearl from his stash, he firmly grasped it, pulling back and throwing it as far as he possibly could.**

**He blinked out of existence, reappearing near the entrance to the corridor he had first entered through. Taking a moment to gather his bearings, he looked back at where he'd come from, watching as both Antfrost and Badboyhalo chased after him, growing closer by the second.**

Ranboo looked down at the sleeping blond, sighing tiredly to himself. He frowned deeply.

**Frantically, Tommy sprinted down the hall, barely keeping his footing as he heard the thudding of heavily enchanted boots behind him.**

**A clawed hand just barely missed his left ear, and he cried out in alarm, whirling around and walling off the corridor with cobblestone. He ran as fast as he possibly could, heart hammering in his ears as he heard the sound of blocks breaking.**

Phil winced at the sight, wings ruffling. Despite how much they saw, it never got easier to witness his youngest in danger and to be unable of doing anything.

He felt useless.

**Looking up at the water elevator, Tommy grasped his trident, taking a reassuring breath.**

**However, just as he moved to enter, something grabbed at his ankle and *pulled*.**

**Tommy shrieked, falling onto the hard stone with a loud thump as the hand curled around his ankle, pulling at him desperately.**

Sapnap bit the inside of his cheek, watching worriedly with his brows pinched together.

**He looked back to see Antfrost with a bloodthirsty look in his eyes, claws digging into Tommy's skin as he angrily tugged.**

Puffy glared angrily at the screen.

**With his free foot, the blond pulled it back, kicking the feline violently in the face. Antfrost yowled, releasing his hold on Tommy as he moved to apply pressure to his now bleeding nose.**

Quackity whooped loudly, standing with a big cheer before settling back down. "Way to go, Tommy." He grinned.

Technoblade felt something swell in his chest, and it was as if a bucket of ice water had been dumped over his head as he realized it might've been pride.

**Tommy didn't spare a single glance back, heart hammering in his chest as he stepped into the water.**

**"Oh Tommy~!" A coy voice called from further back. The teen's eyes widened in alarm. Without any further prompting, he used his trident to thrust himself up, water rushing in his ears.**

**He breached the surface with a loud gasp, panting as he heaved his soaking self up onto the grass. Tripping over himself, he made a desperate beeline for the hotel, leaving a trail of wet footprints in his wake.**

Tubbo stared quietly at the screen on the edge of his seat. He gripped Ranboo's clawed hand tightly.

**"We're professional hunters, Tommy." Bad called from behind him as he ran, "Do you really think you can outrun us?"**



Sapnap and George grimaced.

**The blond gasped for air, running as fast as he possibly could as he darted down the Prime Path. Faintly, he could hear the sounds of tridents in the distance further back.**

**Finally, as he rounded the corner, the construction site came into view, and Tommy scrambled to fetch his helmet from his inventory as he continued to run. He clumsily put it on, fastening the straps and making one final dash for the planks.**

Many of them felt relieved as they saw the hotel area come into view, the tension releasing from their bodies.

**Sam Nook stood vigilant near the gate, surveying the perimeter.**

**“Sam!” Tommy cried loudly, skidding to a halt just behind the robot and crouching slightly. He shielded himself from the gaze of his assailants, only his head poking out from behind Sam Nook.**

Sam frowned, watching with sad eyes.

**Bad and Ant stopped just outside the gates, staring wearily at Tommy’s mechanical friend.**

**“They aren’t wearing hardhats!” The blond pointed in an accusatory fashion, waving his finger wildly, “Look! Look!”**

**Sam Nook onlined his optics, his vents activating with a whirl. He took a brief second to gather his bearings before turning to look at the two perpetrators.**

**“HELLO...” He began, “THIS AREA REQUIRES THE USAGE OF A HARDHAT AT ALL TIMES. PLEASE VACATE THE PREMISES.”**

“I didn’t know that thing talked.” Technoblade said, brow raised, “Every time I come by it’s like- off.”

“It mostly exists for Tommy.” Sam explained, “Well, not mostly, it does exist for Tommy. Chances are if he’s not around it’s recharging.”

“That’s so sweet.” Puffy commented softly, “You built that just for him?”

The creeper hybrid flushed slightly, nodding his head. “It’s his guardian.”

At the very least, even if Tommy never wanted anything to do with Sam ever again, the boy would always have Sam Nook.

**For a moment the feline and demon only looked at each other, slightly perturbed. They seemed wary of the mechanical bot.**

**“REFUSAL TO MEET SAFETY PRECAUTIONS WILL RESULT IN FORCED REMOVAL. I REPEAT; PLEASE VACATE THE PREMISES.”**

“What,” Quackity began, “he’s gonna fight them?”

“You do not want to see what that thing is capable of.” Jack replied, looking withered. Niki looked equally as wary in the front row.

**Antfrost glared at Tommy, fur standing straight on his back as he pinned his ears back and hissed.**

**The blond teen grinned, snickering quietly to himself as he stuck out his tongue petulantly. He made an L shape with his hand, pinning it to his forehead.**

**“Always pushing his luck.” Puffy laughed.**

**Tubbo smiled, rolling his eyes.**

**Badboyhalo was silent for a moment, as though he were contemplating something. He eyed the robot with a withered stare before meeting Tommy’s gaze.**

**“This isn’t over, Tommy.” He said quietly, “The Egg isn’t done with you.”**

**“YOU HAVE... TEN SECONDS.” Sam Nook interjected, face stoic but the threat was clear.**

**George smirked at the robot.**

**Wordlessly, the two shared a glance before turning tail, disappearing around the corner they’d first appeared from.**

**Once he was sure they wouldn’t be returning, Tommy let out a relieved sigh, slumping his posture as he could finally relax.**

**He clapped Sam Nook on the shoulder, letting out a giddy sort of laugh.**

**“Thanks Sammy boy,” he hummed, grinning, “I owe ya one.”**

**The screen went dark.**

The periodic silence returned for a few beats as they all sat quietly.

“...We really have to deal with this Egg, don’t we?” Phil muttered, looking tired beyond his years.

“That’s what we’ve been saying!” Puffy cried exasperatedly, gesturing between her and Sam. “It’s only going to get worse!”

Technoblade sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose and leaning over in his seat.

“I really hate having to deal with things.” He said, voice flat and unimpressed.

The screen started back up.

**Tommy trekked angrily through the SMP, practically stomping as he made his way down the path. The sky was rather cloudy that day, and a soft chill ran throughout the entire server.**

**“Stupid fucking trees,” he sneered, “who gives a shit about them anyways? I hate them.”**

Karl snorted; the boy was always so angry.

**He continued on his way, dragging a large netherite axe behind him, unaware of the head of pink hair watching him from the sidelines.**

Jack and Niki alike stiffened instantly. The latter swiveled around in her seat, ignoring the concerned glance she got from Puffy as she met eyes with her partner in crime. They shared a momentary panic.

**Niki narrowed her eyes at the boy, lip curling into a distasteful snarl. She paused, straightening her posture and taking a deep breath to compose herself. A gentle smile washed over her face.**

Puffy furrowed a brow, turning once again to look at Niki, frowning deeply.

**“Tommy!” She called cheerfully, chasing after the boy, “wait up!”**

**The blond stopped, turning around in surprise to see the older woman. He stared at her for a few moments as he caught up to him, looking her up and down.**

**“...Hello Nihachu.” He greeted awkwardly, grimacing.**

Tubbo narrowed his eyes at the screen, the day seemed so familiar for some reason.

**Niki beamed at him, eyes crinkling. She wore a complete set of Netherite, boots pressing into the mud.**

**“What are you up to?” She asked, tilting her head curiously, “Where are you going?”**

**Tommy stared at her for a few more beats before sighing, slouching in on himself. He looked exhausted, but more so in a whiny sense than a hard-earned one.**

Ranboo smiled softly at the antics.

**“I have to go collect spruce for the hotel,” he grumbled, “so I’m going over to Snowchester 'cause I know they have it. And they also have Tubbo so I figured I’d go say hello.”**

The president of Snowchester beamed. His chest swelled with happiness, and he sent a soft smile towards the sleeping boy.

**Niki paused, staring at him, and for just a split second her mask broke, and her distaste for the boy was visible. She quickly plastered on a gentle expression however, her features soft and sweet.**

“I’m sensing a lot of hostility from you.” Fundy said quietly.

“Zip it.” Niki snapped.

Quackity narrowed his eyes at her.

**“I actually know a place with a lot of spruce if you’d like,” she offered, “Snowchester removed most of their trees to make room for more buildings.”**

“Did we?” Tubbo tilted his head, looking over at his husband, “I could have sworn we prioritized preservation.”

Niki and Jack began to sweat nervously.

**Tommy blinked, as though he hadn’t been expecting the offer.**

**“Oh,” he said, “alright.”**

**The older of the two smiled, fishing her communicator from her pocket and looking down at a set of coordinates. She looked up into the distance. “Follow me.” She instructed.**

Something in Ranboo's gut was telling him that Tommy should do anything but follow her. The thought made him feel rather guilty, however.

It was Niki they were talking about. Of course she seemed upset but it was probably completely unrelated. He trusted her, and he knew Tommy did too.

**The blond was happy to oblige, following after her with a lot less of his initial anger he'd been holding before. He rambled on and on about his day, mostly complaining. Niki kept ahead, her back to him so that he wouldn't catch sight of her annoyed glare.**

**"I suppose I'll be nice," Tommy hummed, "how has your day been Niki?"**

"Saying it like that actually makes it less nice." George said, "He does know that right?"

"He doesn't know a lot of things." Sapnap replied.

**The girl stopped for a split second, eyes widening just a fraction before steeling herself over. She looked back at him with a large grin.**

**"It's been good!" She chirped happily, "How was-" she stopped herself, "Oh I suppose I've already asked about yours, haven't I?"**

**"No." Tommy said point blank.**

Fundy barely contained a laugh.

**"Oh..." She trailed off nervously, "um- how was your day then?"**

**The blond grinned as he continued to walk, “Well Niki, I’m so glad you asked.”**

Tubbo groaned, throwing his head back. He rubbed at his temple.

“Never ask Tommy how his day was,” he advised the room, “ever.”

At first, the warning seemed dramatic, but as they listened to Tommy drone on and on and on about anything and everything as he followed the older woman around, they realized it was anything but dramatic.

Finally, the conversation seemed to shift.

**“Niki,” Tommy began, brow furrowed and lips pursed, “why are you being weird?”**

**The woman in question jolted slightly, alarm flashing on her face. She frowned, tilting her head.**

Puffy furrowed a brow.

**“I’m not being weird, Tommy,” she denied, “we just haven’t talked in so long, that’s all!”**

**They scaled a hill together, the biome gradually becoming more and more snowy. Tommy shivered, rubbing his arms. Niki didn’t spare him a glance.**

**“Oh,” he said plainly, “okay then.”**

Niki swallowed thickly, looking off to the side. She hugged herself tightly, growing more agitated by the second.



The pair on screen continued, the young blond chatting away like he'd die if he stopped. He talked about anything and everything, even went on a tangent about the colour of the sky. Anyone could see Niki was getting progressively more annoyed with each word that left his mouth.

**“Tommy,” Niki snapped, teeth grit, “hurry up.”**

**The boy paused, looking to her. He seemed slightly offended, but more than anything surprised at the tone.**

**“What?”**

**Niki paled, realizing quickly that she'd lost her calm. She swiveled around, plastering on a large smile.**

Puffy frowned deeply at the screen, confused as to what her partner was doing. She couldn't think of anything, and that only made her more concerned.

**“Sorry!” She chirped, “didn't mean for that to come out that way!” she laughed, “I just meant we should hurry before it gets dark!”**

**Tommy stared at her, face completely impassive. He looked up at the sky, knowing it was just past noon, before looking back at her.**

Niki winced. It had been a shit lie.

**“...Okay...”**

**They traversed a lake in complete silence, Tommy awkwardly picking at the peeling paint of the boat as Niki rowed.**

Tubbo realized with a start what day it had been. His eyes widened as he reeled back, snapping his head to the side to look at Niki in shock.

She stared at him with pleading eyes, shaking her head.

“You-”

“Please.” She urged him, desperate.

He shut his mouth, watching her quietly, something hot and burning festering inside of him. Still, he turned back to the screen.

Ranboo shot him a concerned glance, squeezing his hand once.

**As soon as they reached land, the blond leapt from the boat, feet splashing in ankle-deep water as he shivered. It was absolutely freezing, but he continued on anyway. He made his way deeper into what looked like a forest.**

**“Tommy?” Niki called, “Tommy, where'd you go?”**

Tubbo bit his tongue as Puffy stared worriedly.

**He looked back at where the voice had come from, letting out a sigh. He seemed to be growing tired of Niki constantly stopping him and steering him in a new direction. Apparently, she had a very specific set of spruce she wanted him to collect.**

**“Over here!” He replied, waving his axe around wildly, “Hurry up would you!?”**

**Further back, Niki’s nostrils flared angrily at the words, face turning slightly red. She paused for just a moment to collect herself, rounding the corner to greet the boy.**

Jack watched the screen wearily, fists clenched tightly. After everything these people had watched Tommy go through, after how fiercely they’d protected him, Jack wondered if he’d even leave the room in one piece.

**“Why are you so stressed and strange?” Tommy demanded, frowning deeply, “I just don’t understand why you’re being so weird, Niki.”**

Tubbo grit his teeth, squeezing his husband’s hand even harder as he kept his mouth shut.

**Niki, who had her back turned to him, grit her teeth and clenched her fists. She took a deep breath, trying to ignore the series of angry panicked texts she was getting from Jack. She turned on her heel, looking over at the blond.**

**“I just want to- to uh- to help you get the best spruce.” She told him, trying for a smile. It came across forced.**

“This is getting weird.” Quackity hissed, “You can’t even come up with a good excuse for whatever it is you’re doing?”

Niki paled, looking down at the ground. She didn’t dare speak.

**Tommy didn’t say a word, merely staring at her. He looked upset by something, though, usually when he *was* upset, he made sure everyone in a seven-mile radius was well aware.**

**“No,” he shook his head, “you’re being *weird*. Wilbur weird.”**

Phil flinched at the words, and Puffy grew even more agitated, biting her lip anxiously.

**Niki bristled, eyes going wide with rage. It was smoothed over in a second, however, and she sighed. She just looked tired.**

**“Just follow me, Tommy.” She said quietly.**

**The blond watched her go, lips thinning into a frown. He looked conflicted, but eventually, he resigned.**

**“Fine,” he obliged, “fine. Let’s go then.”**

Jack cringed, unable to even stand the sight. He looked away, face contorted into a painful frown.

**They walked through the snow in a terse silence. Of course, every now and then Tommy would attempt to start up a conversation, but Niki seemed completely uninterested.**

**It was only as they scaled a hill that she seemed to care about anything.**

Sam felt dread pooling in his stomach.

**There, in the dirt and rock, was a small pit, still steaming in the cold air. Further ahead, even more spanned out across the land. It smelled of burning and chemicals in the air.**

**Niki paled, eyes going wide as her whole body tensed.**

**“No,” she shook her head, “no no no no no...”**

Many of them stared, confused. Tubbo watched pointedly, his rage growing by the second.

**Tommy shot her a concerned glance, frowning.**

**“Are you okay?” He asked tentatively.**

Niki all but flinched at that, shrinking in on herself.

Puffy’s heart hammered in her chest.

**She ignored him, sliding down the rock they stood upon and racing towards the horizon.**

**“Shit!” She hissed, “Shit shit shit!”**

**Tommy’s eyes widened, and he quickly followed after her.**

**“You shouldn’t swear, y’know,” he called, approaching her distant form, “it’s not like you- Holy Fuck!”**

**He skidded to a stop, barely stopping himself from falling to his death as he looked down at the massive crater beneath him. Before him was a giant pit, the other side spanning so far he couldn’t make it out. It went down to bedrock.**

Shock ebbed its way into Puffy’s chest, and she could only watch, completely frozen in place. A similar terror washed over the entire room at the sight of the devastation.

Tubbo whined quietly, mentally berating himself over and over. Tommy could have died. What would Tubbo have done if his own weapons had destroyed his best friend?

**Tommy screamed, balancing himself on the edge and staring in horror.**

**Just a few feet deeper, Jack and Tubbo stood on another ledge, both dressed in hazmat suits.**

“Oh my god,” Phil began, “it’s the nuke testing site.”

“Nuke!?” Quackity cried in alarm, “You mean nuclear weapon!?”

“What else would I mean?” The old man narrowed his eyes.

The duck hybrid didn’t even have it in him to glare back, completely floored by the sight on the screen.

**The blond whirled around, staring at Niki with wide eyes. She had yet to move, frozen in place as she stared at the hole.**

**“We were this close to the nuke!?” Tommy cried, throwing his hands in the air.**

**Instantly, she grew even more pale, snapping her head up to meet his gaze. “No,” she shook her head frantically, “I- I didn’t know I promise I didn’t know! I had no idea! I-”**

**“This is so *cool*!” Tommy shouted, interrupting her with a large grin on his face as he stared down. He made an excited cry of sorts, looking over at Jack and Tubbo as he smiled wide.**

“You bitch!” Quackity seethed, standing from his seat. His wings flared out angrily, ruffling anxiously.

Niki whimpered, tears building in her eyes. “I’m sorry!” She cried.

“You tried to kill him!” He yelled, seeing red. “What did he ever do to you!?”

“He-” the woman swallowed thickly, steeling herself over as she whirled around angrily, eyes red-rimmed, “he’s the problem on this server!” She exclaimed loudly, “He’s why all of this has happened!”

“Are you fucking kidding me!?” Quackity demanded, shoulders hiking up, “You think Tommy’s responsible for the destruction of L’Manberg!? You think he’s responsible for the Butcher Army!? You think he’s responsible for the fucking Vault!?”

Puffy was completely still, frozen in her place, eyes wide and unseeing.

“It’s him and Dream!” Niki cried back, “We could be happy without them!”

“Not me!” the duck hybrid hissed, baring his teeth, “I wouldn’t want to spend another day in a server without Tommy- And don’t you fucking dare compare him to Dream.” He spat, “After everything he’s been through you still have the audacity to say him and Dream are the same!?”

Niki faltered slightly, eyes going wide. “Well- Well no! Of course they’re not the same! I’m not- don’t imply I’m dismissing what Tommy’s been through!”

“Well, that’s what it sounds like you’re doing!”

“I’m not!” She shrieked, “I just- I-” She paused, tears welling in her eyes, “I don’t have anyone else to blame!”

The room went quiet as she cried, listening to the loud sobs that wracked her body. She hugged herself tightly.

No one said a word, watching silently.

And it was at that moment that Puffy stood. Her shoulders terse and stiff, she rose from her spot in the ground, ever so carefully turning around. Tears streamed down her face as she stared at her partner, a silent fury in her eyes.

“Puffy-” Niki began desperately.

“Don’t.” The older woman snapped, voice breaking as she did.

For a moment the two did nothing but stare at each other, and it was almost as if they were silently conversing.

And ever so slowly, Puffy raised her hand.

“You know what?” She smiled bitterly, “keep the fucking ring.” She spat, pulling at her finger, “and take mine too.” She clasped the diamond ring in her palm, throwing it at her partner’s feet.

Niki stared down in horror.

“Puffy-” She tried again, sobbing quietly.



“I said don’t!” The older woman cried, fists clenched tightly. “I don’t want to fucking hear it.”

“But Jack-”

“Oh I have no doubt that Jack was in on it too,” Puffy laughed incredulously, and the man paled dramatically as many eyes fell on him, “but I at least know where he was coming from. Tommy killed him, okay? That’s a different kind of anger that I couldn’t possibly understand,” she shook her head, “but you?” she whispered, staring into pale blue-green eyes, “all Tommy ever did was love you.”

Niki’s heart dropped, and she stared with wide eyes as the other woman moved to sit back down.

“Puffy please.” She begged.

There was no response, and she was forced to sit back down, crying softly to herself.

Puffy didn’t dare look back.

**“Tommy!” Tubbo yelled out, just then noticing the blond. There was a grin equally as big as Tommy’s on his face. “How insane is this!?”**

**The blond ran over to his friend, scaling the jagged rock haphazardly.**

**“Well done Tubbo!” He commended, “This is just absolutely excellent!” He cheered.**

Tubbo smiled sadly, his anger not quite gone, but Puffy had expressed enough of it for the both of them.

**Beside the president of Snowchester, Jack Manifold stood looking almost enraged, but more than anything, completely shocked. Niki had moved to stand beside him, ashamed with her head bowed.**

Jack stiffened, and Niki muffled a sob as she cried into her sleeve.

**“Tommy,” Tubbo began, as though he was just realizing, “Tommy you need to stay back. You’re going to get radiation poisoning.”**

The president sighed, knowing how that day had ended.

**The youngest of the four scoffed, rolling his eyes.**

**“Do I look like someone who would get taken out by some *nuke*?” He grinned cockily.**

**“Apparently not!” Jack cried, affronted, but it was quickly drowned out as Tubbo and Tommy excitedly dove down deep into the hole, running around like children inside of it.**

Had it not been a murder attempt, Fundy would have found the comment a lot more comedic than he already did. Still, he chose to keep his mouth shut. Still reeling from the knowledge that Niki and Jack had tried to kill Tommy.

**The clouds in the sky had parted, making way for the sun to shine down on the pure *abomination* that Tubbo and Jack had created. Tommy laughed wildly, ignoring the pounding in his head as he ran amuck.**

**“Thank god you two showed up at the time you did,” Tubbo hummed, looking over the wide expanse of devastation, “if you’d been here literally thirty seconds earlier this would have been a *completely* different story!”**

Many of them winced, staring awkwardly at the screen and trying to ignore the elephant in the room.

**Tommy stopped in his tracks at that, turning to look at his friend as the smile fell from his face. He furrowed a brow.**

**“What?” He demanded.**

Puffy’s heart sank, and Ranboo sucked in a sharp breath.

**Tubbo turned to face him.**

**“Tommy,” he began, and though he was laughing there was a sense of urgency in his tone, “we *just* launched this. If you’d been any earlier you would have quite literally been *blown up!*”**

**The blond stared at his friend in shock, realization slowly taking over his features. He stared back up at where Niki and Jack were standing a safe distance away, arguing loudly.**

Niki’s chest tightened. Oh. He knew.

Sam hadn’t said a word, completely tense beside her, and she almost feared for her safety, thinking back to where Jack had been pinned to the wall just for saying exile had been a walk in the park.

She swallowed nervously, choking back tears.

**“You mean if I’d gotten here, the place Niki was leading me to, *seconds* earlier, I would have been dead?” He whispered, eyes wide. He looked almost devastated at the thought, looking back at the girl once more.**

Puffy closed her eyes, as though the words physically pained her, tears dripping down her face.

**Tubbo was completely silent, not understanding but still concerned.**

**There was a drawn-out silence between the two before Tommy snapped back to himself. He shook the hurt away, forcing a grin to overtake his features.**

**“Yeesh!” He cried, “Good thing that didn’t happen, yeah?” He laughed, “Let’s get back to exploring this shit!”**

**Niki and Jack watched him quietly from above.**

That time, the silence claimed the room once again, but not a single soul wanted to break it.

Karl sighed sadly to himself, drooping low in his seat and playing absentmindedly with his hoodie strings. He felt nauseous.

Ranboo held onto Tommy just a little tighter, heart hammering in his chest.

Tubbo, however, stewed silently in a completely quiet rage. Tommy’s reaction when it had happened had been indication enough that he was willing to move past it, to brush over it and not hold it against Niki. But just as Tommy was so adamant about his execution, Tubbo knew he would never forgive Niki or Jack for what they’d done.

Because that was it, wasn’t it? Tubbo would be there for Tommy, he’d care for Tommy in instances where he couldn’t care for himself. And Tommy would be there for Tubbo, he’d do the same. Just as he’d done a thousand times before;

And no matter what, Tubbo wouldn't forget.

## Chapter End Notes

LOL, IVE BEEN DEAD Y'ALL  
HAPPY NEW YEARS THOUGH?? I LOVE Y'ALL, I PROMISE I DIDNT FORGET  
TO FEED YOU

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